DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 869 RC 024 088

AUTHOR	Carlson, Robert V.
TITLE	Follow-Up Study of Rural Schools Implementing CSR Programs in the Southwest. Research Report.
INSTITUTION	Southwest Educational Development Lab., Austin, TX.
SPONS AGENCY	Institute of Education Sciences (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2003-04-00
NOTE	81p.
CONTRACT	ED-01-CO-0009
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Academic Standards; Administrator Role; Case Studies; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Faculty Mobility; Geographic Isolation; High Stakes Tests; Low Income; Professional Development; *Program Effectiveness; *Rural Schools; *Small Schools; Teacher Expectations of Students
IDENTIFIERS	*Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program; United States (Southwest)

ABSTRACT

Case studies of five small and isolated rural schools in the Southwest focused on their ability to fully implement Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR) programs over the 3-year period of their federal grants. Data were gathered via interviews with school personnel, classroom observations, document reviews, and telephone interviews with each school's model developers. Findings indicate that the more prescriptive models received more teacher support, whereas the more open-ended programs appeared more fragile. The elementary models included student monitoring techniques that showed continuous student progress. The more open-ended models, used primarily at the secondary level, did not provide this ongoing feedback. Staff development activities played a significant role in providing teachers with necessary knowledge and skills. Resistance to reform efforts lessened as unsupportive teachers left, but training new teachers was problematic. Administrators played an important role in initiating CSR programs, but leadership became less of an issue as the projects moved forward. Attempts to keep parents informed and supportive of the programs were modest. However, two schools found that uninformed parents were apathetic when it came to providing additional financial resources. State academic standards and mandated exams were a major influence on sustaining teacher attention to student progress. Test results provided an inconclusive picture of the relationship between CSR efforts and student performance. Teachers and consultants attributed greater progress to their students than that reflected in state-mandated tests. The rural context did not negatively influence program implementation. Five appendices present summaries for the five schools. (TD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 476 869

RC RCTR 0022

Follow-up Study of Rural Schools Implementing CSR Programs in the Southwest

RESEARCH REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SEDL
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
211 E. 7th St.
Austin, TX 78701-3281
512-476-6861

RC 024088

SEDL
Southwest Educational
Development Laboratory

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
211 E. 7th St., Austin, TX 78701-3281
512-476-6861

FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF RURAL SCHOOLS IMPLEMENTING CSR PROGRAMS IN THE SOUTHWEST

Research Report
April 2003

Robert V. Carlson, Ed.D.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
211 East Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701
www.sedl.org

©Southwest Educational Development Laboratory 2003. This publication was produced in whole or in part with funds from the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, under contract number ED-01-CO-0009. The content herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Education, any other agency of the U.S. Government, or any other source.

Contents

List of Tables iv

Overview of SEDL Follow-up Study of Rural Schools Implementing CSR Programs in the Southwest 1

Background 1

Purpose 2

Design 2

Research Questions 3

Study Findings 5

Summary of School CSR Projects 5

Summary of Research Questions 7

Summary of Student Test Results 15

Discussion of Study Findings 17

Implementation Success 17

Student Performance and Test Results 20

Additional Observations 20

Implications of the Study 22

Final Comments 24

References 25

Appendix A: Copper Elementary School, Copper, New Mexico 26

Appendix B: Crossover Elementary and Secondary Schools, Crossover, Texas 36

Appendix C: Liberty Elementary and Secondary Schools, Liberty, Oklahoma 46

Appendix D: Sugar Elementary School, Sugar, Louisiana 55

Appendix E: Sumac Elementary School, Sumac, Arkansas 64

List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of Rural Case Study Sites and Related Data 3

Table 2: Summary of School Implementation Efforts 7

Table 3: Future CSR-Related Plans 14

Table 4: Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills
Median National Percentile Results, 1998–2002 32

Table 5: Percentage of Students Reading At or Above Grade Level
Using Success for All Test Results, 1999–2002 33

Table 6: Percentage of Students Who Scored at Levels 1–6 on
New Mexico Writing Assessment Holistic Test, 1998–2001 34

Table 7: Percentage of Students in Grades 3–5 Who Passed the
Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, 1998–2002 43

Table 8: Percentage of Students in Grades 6–10 Who Passed the
Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, 1999–2002 44

Table 9: Grade 3 Iowa Test and Grades 5 and 8 Oklahoma Core
Curriculum Test Percentile Results, 1999–2001 53

Table 10: Grades 5 and 8 Benchmark Performances on Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests, 1999–2001 54

Table 11: Developmental Reading Assessment Results, 1999–2002 61

Table 12: Grade 4 LEAP Results, 2000–2002 62

Table 13: National Percentile Rankings on the Iowa Tests, 2000–2002 62

Table 14: School Performance Scores, 1999–2002 63

Table 15: Percentage of Grade 4 Students Who Scored at Different Levels on Arkansas Benchmark Exams in Math and Literacy, 1999–2002 70

Table 16: Percentage of Grade 6 Students Who Scored at Different Levels on Arkansas Benchmark Exams in Math and Literacy, 2001–2002 71

Table 17: Average Percentile Rankings for Grades 1–6 on the Stanford Reading Achievement Test, 1998–2001 72

Table 18: Average Percentile Rankings for Grades 1–6 on the Stanford Math Achievement Test, 1998–2001 72

Overview of SEDL Follow-up Study of Rural Schools Implementing CSR Programs in the Southwest

To determine whether isolated and small rural schools could fully participate in the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) conducted a follow-up CSR study in Fall 2002 and its predecessor study (Carlson, 2000). The follow-up study focused on the same five rural schools featured in the predecessor study to learn the degree to which they were able to fully implement their CSR programs over the three-year period of their respective grants. This Spring 2003 report contains the results of the follow-up study and its implications for providing targeted external funds for the implementation of comprehensive research-based programs.

Background

In 1997, Congress passed the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, a three-year federal initiative to reorganize and revitalize schools, especially low-performing schools. CSRD grant winners received $50,000 each year to implement research-based, comprehensive school reform models. The CSRD program has several unique features, such as a relatively long grant period; local adoption of comprehensive, research-based reform models; and involvement with an external technical assistance provider. These features prompted SEDL to study the first-year efforts of five carefully selected small and isolated rural schools, one located in each of the states SEDL serves: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

SEDL contracted Dr. Robert V. Carlson of ABC Associates to conduct this one-year study during the 1999–2000 school year. The following four questions guided this investigation:

- What schoolwide reform models were chosen by the respective schools and why?
- What challenges and barriers had the schools faced in implementing their chosen models?
- What role did the model developers play in their implementation?
- How did the rural context help and/or hinder the process of implementation?

This investigation used a case study design and related methodology (Merriam, 1991). Each school selected for the study was visited twice—once in the fall, soon after initiation of its CSRD program, and again in the spring, six months following the fall visit. For each on-site visit, which lasted either two or three days, interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators directly involved in selecting and implementing the chosen CSRD program, pertinent observations were made, and reports and curricula materials were reviewed. Before each school visit, model developers and their consultants, who provided on-site technical assistance, participated in telephone interviews. SEDL published the results of this investigation in the November 2000 report titled *Case Studies of Rural Schools Implementing Comprehensive School Reform Models*.

The study showed that all five schools made significant progress in the first year of their respective three-year grants. The schools with more prescriptive CSRD models (i.e., provided comprehensive and explicit directions for implementation) implemented their models very quickly, and teachers were able to directly observe pupil progress and change. Conversely, those schools that selected less prescriptive programs (i.e., provided only general directions and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

processes and were far less clear on expected outcomes) progressed more slowly. In all cases during the first year of implementation, model developers and their support staff were able to fulfill the respective schools' expectations for timely and relevant training. The isolated, small, and rural nature of the participating schools did not serve as a major barrier in initiating chosen CSRD implementation models. Further, the $50,000 funding for the first year played a significant role in initiating and implementing Year 1 plans.

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education changed the name of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program to the Comprehensive School Reform program because CSR is no longer a demonstration project. It continues to provide annual funding to assist public schools in implementing CSR programs and to encourage schools in developing CSR programs using scientifically based research and effective practices.

Purpose

The five rural schools discussed above completed their three-year CSR grants in June 2002. This provided a propitious opportunity to determine the following:

- Was each school successful in fully implementing their respective CSR models? If not, why not? Was each school able to sustain the momentum of its first year? In cases where schools made minimal progress, were they able to make greater progress in subsequent years? This context provided an opportunity to determine what factors seemed to contribute to sustained progress or lack thereof.
- Did schools observe any differences in student performance, particularly the skills and knowledge measured by state-mandated performance tests? Several of the schools in this study were facing state action because of low student performance on state-mandated tests.

The follow-up study of these five schools at the end of their grants provided a unique opportunity to learn if CSR grants were fully implemented and sustained over the three-year grant period, and whether the planned interventions of the respective schools had any apparent impact on student test performance.

Design

The follow-up study used the Year 1 (1999–2000) case study methodology. Each of the original study's five schools were visited for two days in Fall 2002 to interview key school personnel, conduct relevant classroom observations, and collect pertinent reports and test results. Following each school visit, telephone interviews were conducted with the model developers' representatives who were responsible for assisting a school in implementing its chosen research-based intervention program. Summaries (see appendices A–E) for each of the five schools provide the foundation for the post-study findings discussed in this report.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 1 presents a profile of each school in the original study and the follow-up study. These profiles show the considerable diversity among the five schools chosen for these studies. The schools were selected to provide a cross section of characteristics including size of school, grade levels, size of community, location respective to metropolitan areas, and CSR model chosen. Schools also were selected because they serve primarily children from families of modest or low income who present unique learning needs. Pseudonyms have been used for each of the schools to ensure anonymity of the schools and their staff members.

Table 1: Characteristics of Rural Case Study Sites and Related Data

Characteristics	Sumac, Arkansas	Sugar, Louisiana	Copper, New Mexico	Liberty, Oklahoma	Crossover, Texas
School Size	364	260	71	244	277
Grade Levels	K–6	PreK–6	K–5	PreK–12	K–12
Community Size	2,200	1,864	600	1,700	350
Distance from Metropolitan Area (in miles)	150	50	167	50	60
Title I Eligible	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (percent of students)	56	98	71	72	70
CSR Model	Core Knowledge; Investigations in Number, Data and Space; Literature-Based Reading	Early Literacy Initiative	Success for All	Effective Schools Model, Accelerated Reader	Reading Renaissance, Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement, Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Schools

Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- How successful was each rural school in fully implementing their respective CSR models?
- What differences emerged in student performance over the three-year CSR grant period, particularly pertaining to the skills and knowledge measured by state-mandated tests that might be attributable to the schools' selected CSR model?

Individual and/or group interviews, observations of appropriate and related activities such as classroom instruction and group meetings, and document and report reviews (e.g., test results) were compiled in a database that was used to answer these questions.

Within each of the data-gathering methods, more specific inquiries were made. Samples of the information pursued within each of the data-gathering methods include the following.

Interview Queries

- Reflecting on your school's CSR model, what was or was not implemented over the three years of your grant?
- What seemed to enable your implementation plans and, if appropriate, what seemed to hinder implementing aspects of your CSR model?
- What role did the developer(s) (or consultants) play in carrying out your plans?
- What impact do you feel the implementation of your CSR model has had on student progress (e.g., skills and knowledge), the teachers (e.g., teaching methods), the school (e.g., curricula), the parents (e.g., level of involvement), and the community (e.g., support for the school)?
- Now that the grant period has ended, what aspects of your CSR model will continue and not continue? Are there other plans for the future?

Observations

- Classroom instruction that reflects implementation of the CSR model approaches
- Acquisition of instructional tools (e.g., curricula guides and materials, computers and software, and supplemental materials such as books, tapes, and CDs)
- Use of computer technology (e.g., Internet, self-guided instruction, student research)
- Group meetings demonstrating use of CSR strategies (e.g., teacher committees, faculty meetings, teacher inservice)

Document and Report Reviews

- Newspaper articles
- Reports of CSR progress to state, school board, parents and others
- Planning documents
- CSR consultant reports and handouts at inservice meetings
- Curriculum guides and instructional teacher manuals derived from CSR activities
- Test data for years 1–3 of the CSR grant period (e.g., state-mandated tests and standardized achievement tests)

These inquiry methods and data sources form the basis for the following discussion on the study's findings.

Study Findings

The follow-up study findings in this section include a summary of the respective CSR projects for each of the five rural schools and reports of the similarities and differences among the schools. The research questions described in the overview section provide a framework for a discussion of the findings at each of the five schools.

Summary of School CSR Projects

As illustrated in Table 1, the CSR models pursued by each of the five schools differed regarding certain elements. A presentation of the respective CSR models identified and implemented in each of the rural schools follows.

Copper, New Mexico

Copper's primary focus was the Success for All program in grades K–5. Success for All focuses primarily on reading skills and emphasizes a comprehensive approach to ensure the success of every child. The program stresses prevention and early intervention to anticipate and solve any learning problems. Success for All draws upon a research-based curriculum; extensive professional development in proven strategies for instruction, assessment, and classroom management; one-on-one tutoring of children requiring additional instruction; and active family support techniques. The program requires a full-time facilitator who helps faculty and staff implement the program and organizes and monitors the eight-week assessments that determine student assignment to appropriate reading levels and instructional groups. Because of strict instructional protocols, teacher professional development by Success for All consultants is essential to the effective implementation of the program. Success for All consultants provide training at the school and follow-up consultations over the phone.

Crossover, Texas

Crossover's CSR model targets grades K–5 with Reading Renaissance and grades 6–12 with Accelerated Schools. Reading Renaissance, which included the use of Accelerated Reader books and software, provided a framework for integrating reading and writing instruction using computers and volunteers at the elementary level. The elementary staff also incorporated the Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement program developed by Phi Delta Kappa to reexamine teaching methods and their effect on low-performing students.

At the middle and high school levels, the Accelerated Schools model addressed the school mission, teamwork, and cooperation among staff members, teaching methodologies, and curriculum alignment and development. The upper-level teachers also attempted to incorporate Reading Renaissance elements in their teaching.

To support these new instructional and organizational changes, Crossover educators used CSR funds to acquire computers and software, establish three computer labs with fiber optic connections to classrooms and Internet services, establish a parent volunteer center, and support teacher professional development activities. Crossover's CSR funds were matched with Texas state funds, which gave the schools a sufficient budget to underwrite these additional efforts.

Liberty, Oklahoma

Liberty chose to pursue the Effective Schools Model supported and developed by the Center for Effective Schools at the University of Oklahoma. The Effective Schools Model addresses seven correlates: safe and orderly environment, clear school mission, instructional leadership, high student expectations, opportunity to learn, student progress monitoring, and community involvement. Inservice training by Oklahoma University focused on leadership skill development, instructional practices, team building, school and district policies, and student assessment techniques. In addition to supporting the Center for Effective Schools contract, CSR funds were used for teacher training stipends; the purchase of Accelerated Reader books and software; classroom materials, calculators, keyboards, and chemistry and physical science curricular programs; and 10 computers with Internet connections and five printers.

Sugar, Louisiana

Sugar's CSR program featured the Early Literacy Initiative Project, developed by Southeastern Louisiana University. The Early Literacy Initiative Project uses a staff development model that includes a 10-day summer institute and academic year follow-up that consists of on-site coaching and demonstrations offered by a site coordinator. The program emphasizes job-embedded structures to facilitate acquisition of early literacy teaching skills and understandings. Job-embedded structures include reflective journals, grade-level networking, literacy management teams, action research, video critiques of teaching segments, analyzing student work, and faculty study groups. The Early Literacy Initiative Project targets grades preK–3 and emphasizes reading, writing, and spelling skills. The Reading Recovery and Accelerated Reading programs reinforced the Early Literacy Initiative Project at Sugar.

Sumac, Arkansas

The three program components of Sumac's CSR model were Core Knowledge; Investigations in Number, Data, and Space; and Literature-Based Reading. Each program was selected to address school concerns regarding curriculum alignment and coordination as well as low student performance in mathematics and reading.

Core Knowledge is a K–8 curriculum based on the work of E. D. Hirsch, Jr., that focuses on teaching a common core of concepts, skills, and knowledge that characterize a "culturally literate" and educated person. It offers a detailed, grade-by-grade progression of content in history, geography, math, science, language arts, and fine arts. It provides half of a school's curriculum.

Investigations in Number, Data, and Space was developed by the National Science Foundation, recommended by the Arkansas Statewide Systemic Initiative, and supported by a professor from Southern Arkansas University. The mathematics program emphasizes mathematical reasoning and problem solving in a true sense, meaning students must learn to describe, compare, and discuss their approaches to solve problems. Students accomplish this through cooperative learning groups and ongoing assessment activities rather than student textbooks.

Literature-Based Reading emphasizes ongoing assessment and provides a skill checklist based on state-mandated test performance standards. The program also promotes infusing reading into all subject areas, helping students progress at individual rates, pursuing writing as a literacy skill, and

using Accelerated Reading books and software. A Southern Arkansas University reading professor supported the program.

Summary of Research Questions

As indicated earlier, five general questions guided the inquiry process, which included interviews, observations, and document and report reviews. In appendices A–E, the five questions are discussed for each of the respective schools studied. This section provides a meta-summary for each of the five questions.

Question 1: Reflecting on your school's CSR model, what was or was not implemented over the three years of the grant?

The schools involved in this study experienced varying degrees of implementation success. Sugar topped the list by fully implementing their CSR plans and working to extend their early literacy success to the upper elementary grades. Copper, Crossover, and Liberty experienced some difficulties but were generally successful. Sumac had difficulty in overcoming some teacher resistance and distractions, such as concerns stemming from state-mandated test results.

Table 2: Summary of School Implementation Efforts

Schools	CSR Models	CSR Implementation Results
Copper, New Mexico	Success for All	Nearly fully implemented. Had some difficulties with obtaining tutors, reducing site facilitator to part time, and encouraging parent involvement.
Crossover, Texas	Reading Renaissance, Accelerated Reader in reading and mathematics, Accelerated Schools, Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement, parent center, and computer labs	Nearly fully implemented. Implemented all programs except Accelerated Schools, which was partially implemented at the secondary level and still in progress.
Liberty, Oklahoma	Effective Schools Model, Accelerated Reader	Nearly fully implemented. Had some difficulties in sustaining momentum and support into Year 3.
Sumac, Arkansas	Core Knowledge; Investigations in Number, Data, and Space; and Literature-Based Reading	Partially implemented. Had some difficulties in sustaining Core Knowledge in Year 3. Delayed Literature-Based Reading implementation to years 2 and 3. Investigations in Number, Data, and Space was fully implemented.
Sugar, Louisiana	Early Literacy Initiative Project	Fully implemented the Early Literacy Initiative Project in grades 4–6.

Question 2: What seemed to enable your implementation plans and, if appropriate, what seemed to prevent implementing aspects of your CSR model?

This question attempted to explore those factors that school personnel and outside consultants perceived to contribute to or impeded the attainment of their CSR objectives. These factors are organized into three categories: teacher, school, and external.

Factors that Contributed to CSR Implementation
The following factors seemed to move the implementation process along and help ensure the level of success the schools in this study experienced.

Teacher Factors
- Teacher observations of student progress and success (five of five schools)
- Teacher cohesion and joint planning (five of five schools)
- Teacher acquisition of a sense of empowerment and professional competence (five of five schools)
- Teacher involvement in selecting CSR programs (three of five schools)
- Teacher turnover of "resisters" (two of five schools)

Most of the teachers from the five schools in the study agreed that the factor that made the most positive impact on CSR program implementation was observing student progress throughout the process. Daily, weekly, and periodic assessments (e.g., Success for All eight-week assessment) of student work provided tangible evidence that students were making sufficient progress and, in most cases, showing more improvement than past students. Teacher cohesion and joint planning took the form of openly sharing materials and instructional techniques often in informal, before-school, and in-the-hallway exchanges. These new insights and evidence of success gave teachers a perception of competence that was built over time resulting in a new appreciation of their capabilities to influence student progress. The external and, in some cases, internal consultants provided valuable instructional methods and feedback that added to the teachers' positive self-image. As for teacher involvement in the selection of their respective CSR programs, three of the five schools took this seriously and explored alternative programs in a systematic and inclusive fashion. Liberty and Sumac short-circuited this involvement process and, in some ways, paid the price by creating centers of resistance and skepticism partly overcome by implementation success and turnover.

School Factors
- Instructional materials (e.g., books, curriculum guides, computers with software and Internet connections, CDs, and videos) provided in a timely fashion (five of five schools)
- School-schedule adjustments to provide teachers with release time for planning and inservice training (five of five schools)
- Staff inservice programs, including on-site training and classroom consultations by outside developer consultant teams (five of five schools)
- Building-level principal leadership (four of five schools)
- District-level leadership and support (four of five schools)
- Small size of the school eased communication among the teachers (four of five schools)
- Full-time or part-time on-site coordinators or coaches (three of five schools)

When it came to positive school factors, leadership and support of principals and district superintendents played a significant role in initiating the grants, involving teachers in the selection of CSR programs, problem shooting implementation difficulties through such strategies as sufficient instructional aids and time for planning, and participating with the teachers in their respective inservice programs. Teachers expressed how much they appreciated and desired administrator support and direct involvement in implementing their CSR programs. This involvement assured teachers that their efforts would be acknowledged, that the implementation process would stay on course, and that the administrators would be fully informed regarding the many dimensions of their new programs. As mentioned earlier, the on-site inservice programs and classroom coaching helped to ensure school-wide implementation of CSR plans.

External Factors

- State-level and mandated testing programs (five of five schools)
- Parent involvement and/or orientation meetings (four of five schools)

Parent involvement took many different forms across the schools in this study. In Crossover, parent volunteers participated in training to become teaching aides. In Copper, parents played an active role in listening to their children read stories at home to reinforce reading skills. In Sugar and Sumac, parents were invited to special assemblies to learn about the new programs being implemented at their respective schools. Liberty was less successful in garnering parent support though they attempted special programs as well. Parental influence impacted student performance on required state-level testing programs, according to teachers and administrators.

Though many teachers felt these tests were narrow in focus and emphasized too much, all agreed that the tests required their careful attention. Educators at Crossover expressed concern about low test scores and a threatened state takeover of their schools. This concern resulted in efforts to prepare their students on specific test items. In Year 3 of their CSR grant, Sumac appeared equally concerned about their test performance to the point of wanting to return to the "basics" and minimize their efforts in implementing the new programs in Core Knowledge, mathematics, and reading. The remaining schools (Copper, Liberty, and Sugar) seemed less concerned about state-mandated tests but were well aware of the tests' importance and were showcasing test results that seem to reinforce successful implementation of their respective programs.

Overall, the external factors listed above reflect conventional wisdom and research (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Crandall et al., 1982; Datnow, Borman, & Stringfield, 2000; Stringfield et al., 1997) on successful implementation of change in school organizations. Two factors—teacher sense of empowerment and statewide mandated testing programs—may warrant further examination. Teachers from each of the five schools spoke of generally feeling threatened and insecure about taking on the challenges associated with their respective CSR plans. But with the help of external and internal consultants, teachers developed confidence in their abilities to successfully implement the changes that they were asked to make. Many teachers spoke of being pleasantly surprised at what their students accomplished with new instructional strategies and realizing how, in the past, they greatly underestimated their students' capacity to learn. On the other hand, many of the same teachers expressed stress over mandated state testing programs and the dire consequences of failing to perform at a high enough level. Teachers said they felt they had to commit new energy to ensure that their schools were successful in meeting the twin

challenges of implementing the new CSR plans and improving test performance. As the teachers met these respective challenges, their sense of potency also increased.

Factors that Impeded CSR Implementation
The following factors surfaced most during interviews with teachers, administrators, and program consultants as hindrances to the CSR implementation process.

Teacher Factors
- Some teacher resistance to implementing proposed programs (four of five schools)
- Teacher overload and stress (four of five schools)
- Teacher turnover (four of five schools)
- Limited number of teachers and/or staff to perform necessary tasks (three of five schools)
- Insufficient teacher involvement in choosing CSR programs (two of five schools)
- Ability of a small number of resistant teachers to have considerable influence in a small community (one of five schools)

The most challenging teacher factors were overloads caused by insufficient personnel to implement all aspects of the new programs and teacher resistance that stemmed from the lack of involvement in the selection of the CSR programs and/or skepticism of the new programs' potential. Strong consultant guidance and daily reminders of new and positive student gains helped schools overcome some of the skepticism. Teacher turnover hindered school ability to provide sufficient orientation and background to new teachers so that they could adapt their teaching methods to the new program requirements.

School Factors
- Limited funds to support hiring extra personnel (three of five schools)
- Limited opportunity to provide sufficient training sessions (one of five schools)

Though CSR funds were instrumental in facilitating the requirements of the new programs, three of the five schools experienced difficulty in providing full support to their new initiatives. For example, Copper could not retain its internal facilitator on a full-time basis, Sugar was in need of an additional Reading Discovery teacher, and Liberty was not able to hire a part-time coach or on-site consultant to provide follow-up of suggestions generated through their inservice programs.

External Factors
- Insufficient involvement of parents and community members (five of five schools)
- Insufficient school board support (one of five schools)

Personnel in all of the schools expressed some disappointment regarding the lack of parental and community-member involvement in the implementation of their new CSR programs. Though some schools made special efforts to address this type of involvement, and they experienced some positive results, administrators in particular did not feel they were sufficiently successful in addressing this need. In Liberty, for example, administrators believed the lack of success in orienting school board members led to a lack of funding for desired curricular changes. At Sumac, educators thought they could have alleviated parent concerns if they had explained their new math program better. Copper educators required greater parent participation as part of the Success for

All program and achieved this to some degree in the middle of Year 3, but educators had envisioned a greater level of participation in the earlier stages of implementation. Sugar faculty worked to revitalize their defunct parent-teacher organization and had some success in increasing parent turnout for parent information nights. Educators from Crossover saw a high degree of parent involvement because of their newly initiated parent center and a range of in-school activities. But the center's early success was difficult to sustain and was not continued at the end of the CSR grant. On the positive side, schools that experienced success with their new parental involvement programs saw a reduction in parent concerns. Parents saw a connection between their involvement and their children's interest in and success at reading and other courses.

In general, these schools were reasonably successful in implementing their respective CSR plans. The factors above played some role at different stages of implementation in each of the schools. Some factors had both positive and negative influences. Teacher turnover, especially at Liberty, was illustrative of this dual influence. Many teachers who resisted the Effective Schools Model effort from the start decided to move on, but replacement teachers needed orientation on Liberty's Effective Schools Model efforts. Size also negatively and positively impacted CSR implementation. Smaller size enabled easy and quick communication among teachers that led to faster decision making, but teacher resisters who lived in the community (e.g., Sumac) and had been at the school for a long period of time were able to exert influence far beyond their numbers.

Question 3: What role did the developer(s) (or consultants) play in carrying out your plans?

School faculty unanimously said the respective developers and/or their consultants involved with these schools effectively played a major role in the implementation of the respective schools' CSR plans. In the early stages of the grant period, teachers were concerned with whether consultants would be teacher-friendly and would provide training relevant to teachers' instructional needs. The consultants rose to this challenge by focusing on the needs of the teachers, providing information in a timely manner, visiting classrooms, demonstrating pertinent teaching methodologies, and staying in touch between school visits. Several teachers spoke of how much they improved their teaching because of direct and honest feedback, demonstration lessons, and realistic suggestions from consultants. Only one consultant experienced resistance and teacher apathy, but this was a result of local conditions beyond her control. All of the other consultants felt welcomed at their respective school sites and were sought out for advice.

The consultants did note some teacher resistance partly driven by concerns over the teachers' ability to implement the new programs and whether these programs could live up to their promise. The consultants had considerable experience working with reluctant and apprehensive teachers and had developed approaches—soliciting from the start teachers' questions and concerns, adapting inservices to local needs and conditions, demonstrating desired teaching methods in the classroom, displaying sensitivity and respect, and maintaining contact between on-site visits—that reduced most of the teachers' concerns.

The relative success of each of the school's CSR plans can be attributed to the effectiveness of the consultants assigned to their chosen intervention programs.

Question 4: What impact do you feel the implementation of your CSR model has had on students' progress, the teachers, the school, the parents, and the community?

In each of the interviews, staff members were asked to share their perceptions of how their CSR models impacted various groups of people associated with their schools. They were asked to focus first on the students and then proceed out to community members. A summary of the major impressions shared by the teachers and administrators involved in implementing CSR programs, along with a discussion of student test performance, follows. Teacher-shared experiences, classroom observations, and consultant feedback provided the information base for the changes summarized below. The impact of the items listed varied across the five schools in this study. More school-specific responses are available in appendices A–E.

Students

- Improved literacy skills (e.g., reading, writing, spelling) and mathematics skills (e.g., computation, reasoning, problem solving)
- Increased independent reading and use of library materials
- Read at several levels above grade assignment
- Responded to and were comfortable with CSR model procedures and techniques
- Reduced disciplinary cases/incidents
- Expressed more interest in academic activities and post-secondary educational opportunities

Teachers and other observers believed that CSR program interventions impacted their students significantly. These perceptions seemed to be mostly based on teachers' day-to-day monitoring of their students as they performed various assignments. Many teachers commented that they were seeing levels of performance that they previously thought were impossible, and this increased their enthusiasm for the programs they were using.

Teachers

- Changed teaching methods and transferred techniques to other subjects
- Learned to work more closely with other teachers
- Acquired student-monitoring skills and appropriate intervention techniques
- Took advantage of additional professional development opportunities
- Increased expectations for student performance
- Acknowledged past underestimations of students' learning potential

Teachers, and even some early dissenters, acknowledged that they had benefited considerably from the new programs and the technical support included in the programs. They felt empowered and discovered the advantages of collaboration. Several teachers said they would never return to past and ineffective practices. Teachers believed the successful practices associated with the new CSR programs would outlast the programs should they be discontinued.

Schools

- Improved alignment and continuity of curricula
- Established consistency across the grade levels in teaching methods and student expectations
- Established a reputation for pursuing new programs successfully and acting as models for teachers from neighboring schools

- Established a culture focused on improving the academic performance of all students
- Acquired a vast inventory of instructional materials, including computers and Internet connections
- Increased teacher cohesion across grade levels
- Increased school pride and care of facilities

During their reflective processes, teachers noted that the positive gains they experienced became woven into the tapestry of their schools' culture and organization. Not only were there notable physical improvements but also attitude improvements. Faculty members' sharing inservice time and team-planning duties contributed to their recognizing the value of collaboration and seeing beyond the stereotypic impressions of colleagues from other grade levels.

Parents

- Displayed greater interest in their children's performance
- Acknowledged the improvement in their children's performance
- Developed a positive attitude toward their children's schools and teachers
- Cooperated more with requests to follow through with student-support techniques in the home
- Resisted somewhat becoming involved in school programs, which caused some schools to fall short of their parental-involvement goals

As parents observed improvement in their children's academic achievement, their support for new school efforts increased over time. Schools still had difficulty overcoming parent apathy and failure to comply with the schools' requests to engage their children more in school-recommended activities. Some schools, such as those in Liberty and Sumac, continued to experience parental concern about and resistance to the CSR initiatives. However, schools generated more parent cooperation and involvement over time.

Communities

- Displayed apathy and were less involved in and aware of CSR programs
- Became more aware of schools' performance on state-mandated tests

It was more difficult to track community interests and involvement in the schools' CSR efforts. Often school board behavior and declarations became a proxy for community interests whether they were positive or negative. The study did show some gains in school board support, but it generally did not find much sustained community interest and/or involvement. The reporting of state-mandated test results may change this in the future.

In general, each of the schools' CSR programs positively impacted various school and community groups. Students, the primary target group, benefited the most because teachers started to recognize their importance and ability in making a difference in their students' academic achievement. As one teacher observed, "We will never be the same again. This was the best thing that could have ever happened to us." This observation echoed across the schools and is the legacy of having chosen to participate in the CSR grant program.

Question 5: Now that the grant period has ended, what aspects of your CSR model will continue and what will not? Other plans for the future?

Given the positive observations of the impact of the respective CSR grants, it seems reasonable to anticipate that these programs would be continued. However, weighing in against the full continuance are other competing forces such as funds and local community and parent concerns. Below is a breakdown by schools of their plans in regards to continuing their CSR program(s).

Table 3: Future CSR-Related Plans

Schools	CSR-Related Future Plans
Copper, New Mexico	Success for All will continue with some modifications. Extra funds are needed to hire tutors, an extra classroom teacher, and a full-time coordinator. Limited local sources will necessitate seeking outside funding.
Crossover, Texas	Reading Renaissance and Accelerated Reader programs will remain in place. At the secondary level, Accelerated Schools faces an unpredictable future. Although some of the teaching methods will remain in practice, the contract with Accelerated Schools has been discontinued. The parent center was replaced with a program targeted at preschool children and families (i.e., Even Start). Computer technology and a full-time technician will remain in place.
Liberty, Oklahoma	Effective Schools Model principles will remain in effect, especially at the elementary level. At the secondary level, the picture is less clear due to turnover of teachers and administrators. The contract with the Center for Effective Schools will not be continued. The school district is facing significant financial problems.
Sugar, Louisiana	The Early Literacy Initiative Project will continue and be extended into the upper elementary classrooms. In spite of insufficient funds, the principal is negotiating with the professor from Southeastern Louisiana University to continue to provide staff development activities in the Early Literacy Initiative Project. The principal is also seeking external funds to hire tutors, train another teacher in Reading Recovery, and acquire additional books for their library.
Sumac, Arkansas	The Core Knowledge program will continue only on a voluntary basis. There is strong teacher support to continue the Investigations in Number, Data, and Space program in spite of some parent and teacher resistance. A compromise may be struck with the Investigations in Number, Data, and Space program to revisit math instruction stressing fundamentals and the possible acquisition of student textbooks. Literature-Based Reading will continue and expand across grade levels. Concerns over scores on the state-mandated tests have taken on a higher priority and may dampen future experimentation.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Most educators strongly desired to continue the programs developed under the CSR grants. Many teachers said they did not want to return to past practices and explained that they had arrived at a skill level that should sustain them into the future. However, staff turnover, insufficient funds, and state-mandated testing programs threaten the courses set by CSR grants. To meet these challenges, school administrators said they know they need to identify and seek outside funding sources. These sources are necessary to support the consultant services that played a central role in their CSR program progress to date.

Summary of Student Test Results

Each of the states in the SEDL region has mandated state-level tests designed to monitor local school districts and individual school pupil progress. Some schools also administer standardized achievement tests. Most of the 1999–2002 test data for the schools under study are included in appendices A–E.

The states have designed their own benchmark exams, and they report their results using different formats, which makes direct state-to-state comparison of scores impossible. Grade promotion and student turnover complicate the analysis of multiple years of performance through these test results. In other words, comparing results at the same grade, like fourth grade, for three or four years, does not reveal gains or losses for the same students but rather indicates how different fourth graders performed over time.

Student mobility and turnover may affect the test results to the same degree, if not more, than new instructional practices. This seems to be the case when 25 or fewer students are being tested—a common practice for the schools in this study. This also is a problem when comparing cohorts of students as they move from grade level to grade level over time. As a professor involved with one of CSR schools in this study said, "The state's testing program is essentially comparing apples and oranges. The only way to truly determine pupil progress is to establish a baseline for each student and monitor his or her performance over time." Clearly, this approach would give a more accurate picture of pupil gains, but state testing programs are not structured in this manner.

With these limitations noted, below are some general observations about each school's state-mandated test results.

Copper, New Mexico

Copper Elementary School used the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills to evaluate their students in grades 1–5 from 1998 to 2002. Grade-level comparisons showed a steady gain from 1999 to 2002 in both reading and math even though the school's CSR project mainly targeted reading. But the cohort comparison showed a noticeable improvement in reading in the same group of children and a slight decline in math, which could be attributed to student turnover.

Crossover, Texas

From 1999–2002, Crossover administered the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) to students in grades 3–8 and 10. The cohort comparison showed an increase in the percentage of students passing the 70 percent minimum as they moved from grade 3 to grade 4. The greatest improvement was in math, which might be attributed to the accelerated math program introduced during the CSR grant period.

Liberty, Oklahoma

Liberty tests third graders with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and reports scores as national percentile ranks. Liberty administers the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests to fifth graders and reports their scores as a percentage of the students who performed at the satisfactory or above satisfactory level. Grade-level comparisons for grade 5 showed some marked improvement in reading for the last year of the grant, 2001–2002, and a decline in math. Conducting cohort comparisons is more problematic because grade 3 students took the Iowa tests, grade 4 students did not take tests, and grade 5 students took the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests. There is no way to judge if the students improved over time in reading and math. However, grade 3 and 5 students performed relatively better in math than in reading.

Sugar, Louisiana

Louisiana schools test all fourth graders on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) achievement battery that includes English Language Arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies. The percentages of students who scored at the Basic level or above were used for grade-level comparisons, and the Iowa Tests Composite national percentile ranks were used for cohort comparisons in grades 3 and 5. The fourth-grade LEAP results showed some improvement in both ELA and math over the results of the first year of the CSR grant. Small gains were observed for students who were in third grade in 2000 when tested again in fifth grade in 2002.

Sumac, Arkansas

All fourth graders in Arkansas take the Arkansas Benchmark Exams in literacy and math. The results are reported as a percentage of the fourth graders who scored at the Basic level or above. Cohort comparisons were conducted using the national percentile rank results on the Stanford Reading and Math Achievement tests. Grade-level comparisons reflected a decline in performance in literacy and a slight improvement in math. The picture for the cohort comparisons showed a decline in both reading and math from grade 3 to grade 5.

The test results for each of the schools in this study provide an inconclusive picture. The small number of students tested and the mobility of the students contributed to these inconsistent results. Copper's results appeared a bit more consistent and reflected an improvement in test scores over time. Crossover shares this positive trend. However, Liberty, Sugar, and Sumac reveal some declines in their test score performances by the third year of their respective CSR grants.

Discussion of Study Findings

This study provided a timely opportunity to revisit five small and isolated Southwest rural schools to determine the degree to which they were able to sustain their initial efforts at implementing their CSR models. It also helped to determine what impact CSR model implementation had upon the schools in general and their students specifically. This section includes a discussion of the findings and their implications for improving the educational programs and performances of rural schools.

As stated earlier, two general purposes guided the follow-up study:

- Determine how successful each rural school was in fully implementing its respective CSR model and if not, why not.
- Determine what differences were observed in student performance over the three years of CSR grant implementation, particularly the skills and knowledge measured by state-mandated tests that might be attributable to the schools' selected CSR models.

Below is a discussion of each of the above study purposes and related observations.

Implementation Success

Effect of CSR Model

First, there was considerable diversity in the selection of CSR models to be implemented over the three-year grant period. This was an intended consequence of the process used in the selection of schools to study.

As reported in the predecessor study, the schools engaged in two general types of interventions. One type primarily targets the elementary level and calls for very clear protocols that were prescriptive in nature—e.g., Accelerated Reader; Early Literacy Initiative; Investigations in Number, Data, and Space; Literature-Based Reading; Reading Renaissance; and Success for All. The second type primarily targets grades K–12 or grades 6–12 and is more global and process-oriented with fewer defined outcomes—e.g., Accelerated Schools and Effective Schools Model. The exception to this was Core Knowledge, which targets grades K–6.

The previous study showed that the more prescriptive programs got off to a quick start and exhibited early results in the implementation process. This was less the case with the more open-ended interventions. However, the follow-up study found that the three-year span of time erased some of the differences in the levels of implementation and acceptance by the teachers involved in the Accelerated Schools and Effective Schools Model programs.

As for the future of these two different types of CSR models, the prescriptive programs appeared more institutionalized and firmly supported by the teachers, while the open-ended programs appeared more fragile. It is difficult to predict what will happen, but the fact that the schools involved in the open-ended programs (e.g., Liberty and Crossover) have not chosen to extend their contracts with the developers may be indicative of waning interest. Note that these programs target the secondary level more than the other CSR models, which reinforces the observation that implementing changes at this level is more difficult. Teacher turnover at the secondary level may

have exacerbated the efforts to implement these models. This, ironically, suggests a greater need for outside consultants, which the schools have chosen to discontinue, to help these new teachers learn the subtle nuances of the CSR programs.

These experiences with different models and targeted grade levels played an important and subtle influence on the probable success of implementation over time.

Effect of Monitoring Student Progress

The determining factor that convinced nearly all elementary teachers that they could effectively implement the new programs was the direct observation of their students' progress. Each of the elementary-level models included student-monitoring techniques, which showed evidence of continuous progress in students.

At the secondary level, the more open-ended models did not provide this ongoing feedback. Secondary teachers had difficulty understanding how a new mission statement, for example, would have any payoff in altering student behavior. But Accelerated Schools and Effective Schools Model did stress instructional changes, and some teachers said these were helpful in engaging their students in subject matter and raising expectations for their performance.

Effect of Staff Development

Staff development activities associated with the implementation of the CSR models observed in this study played a significant role in keeping teachers focused, providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills, and reassuring them that they were on the right track toward successful implementation of their chosen programs. The programs varied in the degree of on-site coordination and oversight, and the teachers generally spoke highly of having this kind of support in the early stages of implementation. The consultants praised the professionalism of the teachers and their ability to respond to advice.

The CSR schools involved in this study reflect the conclusions in *The Annenberg Challenge* (2002), Lesson 5: "Professional development holds the key to better schools. We found teachers—new ones and veterans—eager to become better instructors, and we helped them do it" (p. 23). This was generally the case with the teachers in the five rural schools in this study. Teachers who felt left out of the original selection of their schools' CSR programs generated some resistance at first, but this dissipated over time with well-tailored and adaptive consultative methods. One unintended consequence of new CSR program implementation was the departure of teachers unhappy with CSR efforts in their schools.

Effect of Turnover

Teacher and administrator turnover was seen as both a blessing in disguise and a problem in implementing the new models. At Crossover and Liberty, several teachers who could not support the new programs decided to move to different schools, which reduced the resistance to CSR program implementation. However, as Liberty in particular discovered, training new teachers also presented a problem. The new teachers were less enthusiastic about the Effective Schools Model program, and its future influence appears in doubt. In Sumac, the resistance of some teachers has remained throughout the grant period partially because of their perceived lack of involvement and

professional respect. These teachers stayed at this school because of its strong reputation and the influence they have with their colleagues and parents stemming from their many years of service.

Effect of Leadership and Time

The leadership provided by district and building-level administrators played an important role in initiating and maintaining CSR programs during the three years of the grants. These administrators also helped find alternative ways of providing time for teachers during the school day to meet with consultants and to plan and share ideas. Some of the grants included funds to hire substitutes to release teachers from their classroom assignments. Other districts experimented with adjusting the length of the school day by increasing the time for a specified number of days. This permitted earlier dismissal or the use of a half day of school once or twice a month for planning while satisfying state regulations for minimum hours of instruction per week. Copper moved all of its special classes to Friday, which allowed the teachers time for joint planning one day a week. This effort was abandoned in the second year of the grant due to the difficulty of coordinating special teacher schedules in other schools in the same district.

Regardless, as the projects moved forward, leadership and time became less of an issue and were taken for granted. This may hinder maintenance of the programs in the long run because of administrator turnover. Crossover, Liberty, and Sumac are facing this problem, and the ripple effect is unknown at this time.

Effect of Parent and Community Involvement

The implementation process is less influenced by parent involvement, but lack of this type of involvement could jeopardize a CSR program's future. The schools made attempts to keep parents informed and clarify their roles in supporting the new programs, but these were mostly modest efforts. Further, research has shown "that CSR models that require active involvement of parents and the local community in school governance and improvement activities tend to achieve worse outcomes than models that do not require these activities" (Borman, et al., 2002, p. 36). However, Liberty and Sumac discovered that parents who don't support or feel less informed about the new efforts may impede a CSR program's progress or be apathetic when it comes to providing additional financial resources.

Effect of State-Mandated Testing

State academic standards and mandated exams to monitor local school progress in achieving these standards was a major influence on sustaining teacher attention to student progress. Previously, school administrators and teachers did not widely support testing of any sort and said tests were too time consuming for what they perceived was gained from the results. However, the testing environment has shifted, and the teachers in these rural CSR schools were quick to acknowledge their need for compliance. Teachers felt stressed about being held accountable for improving the test performance of their students. But as student performance improved, teachers felt more confident about the skills they acquired during the implementation of their respective CSR programs. This was a positive unintended consequence of state-mandated tests.

Student Performance and Test Results

The test results displayed earlier in this report provide an inconclusive picture of the relationship between CSR efforts and student performance. This may be attributed to the lack of alignment between CSR program curricula and state-mandated test items. Some of the schools attended to these connections more than others.

Feeling the threat of a state takeover of their school district, Crossover launched an effort independent of and in addition to their CSR activities during the second year of their CSR grant to coach students on TAAS test items. They earned "exemplary" status at the high school level, "acceptable" status at the middle school level, and "recognized" status at the elementary level by the end of the CSR grant period. On the other hand, Sumac's mediocre performance on the Arkansas Benchmark Exams has taken on greater significance as they weigh the merits of their CSR programs. Liberty and the state of Oklahoma are experiencing financial problems that are overshadowing state test results. Sugar and Copper have had some CSR program success, which was somewhat supported by their state test scores, so they are continuing their programs. As expected, state standards and mandated tests are affecting different districts in different ways that could quickly shift based on changes in state testing policy and/or test items.

While all the teachers acknowledge the significance of state-mandated tests, they said they find more instructionally sensitive methods that rely on baseline and individual growth measures more compelling and helpful in judging the progress of their students. State-mandates tests are administered only once a year at selected grade levels—usually fourth. When teachers and consultants were asked how they judged the success of their respective programs, they cited individual student assessment results.

Different test results speak to different audiences. State-level educators want to know whether their schools are meeting standards based on one test administered in selected grades once a year. Teachers, on the other hand, want to know almost daily how their children are progressing so that they can stay the course or adjust to ensure each child makes desired gains. To further cloud the picture, state tests do not necessarily reflect the performance of schools on a specific measure (e.g., classroom teacher oversight of individual pupil progress). Teachers and consultants attributed greater progress to their students than what was reflected in state-mandated test scores. This paradox could prove troublesome. There were some signs that CSR program developers (e.g., Success for All in Copper) are being pressed to stay closer to state testing programs and link some of their instructional objectives to these tests.

Additional Observations

The following also was observed during this in-depth look at five small and isolated schools facing comprehensive school change over a relative short period of three years.

Student Expectations

This study dramatically reinforces the effect of teacher expectations on student performance. Edmonds, a pioneer in investigating this issue, demonstrated its effect on the performance of black children in New York City schools (1979). Though the Southwest is a long way from New York, the same phenomenon exists.

Some of the teachers participating in the follow-up study spoke emotionally about how they had underestimated their students in the past. When they observed how much and how quickly their students were learning the same skills they had taught previously with less success over a longer period of time, teachers became aware of the effect that their expectations had on their students. Introducing new, scientifically based programs exposed teachers to methods and materials that had demonstrated success in other school settings. Teachers said they did not know about these programs, they did not receive good supervision or feedback on their teaching, and they were blissfully ignorant or willing to accept without question assumptions about what children can learn. This was particularly true when educating children of poverty and/or minority backgrounds. Nevertheless, teachers—mostly elementary—using their new CSR program strategies (e.g., Accelerated Reader, Early Literacy Initiative; Investigations in Number, Data, and Space; Reading Renaissance; Success for All) discovered early on how much their students were learning in a shorter period of time. One teacher said, "I'll never be the same again. I have grown professionally and feel so much better about my teaching." According to this study, CSR programs offered some insight into convincing teachers to let go of old, unworkable methods and showed that teachers truly can make a difference.

Measuring Effect

Given the inconsistencies in student test scores discussed earlier in this report and in appendices A–E, measuring the effects of comprehensive schoolwide efforts is often problematic. And as Gorman et al. (2002) point out, it is time sensitive. As they reported on their meta-analyses of CSR program research studies:

> Years of implementation were a statistically significant predictor of effect size . . . After the fifth year of implementation, CSR effects began to increase substantially. Schools that had implemented CSR models for five years showed achievement advantages that were nearly twice those found for CSR schools in general, and after seven years of implementation, the effects were more than two and half times the magnitude of the overall CSR impact . . . (p. 27)

Their analyses raise a question about the importance of the time invested in the implementation process and how long people (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents, tax payers, and policymakers) are willing to wait for a persuasive demonstration of results. Schools have been called upon to show quick results for newly adopted programs or practices. Gorman's analyses extend that timeline nearly 14 years to fully appreciate the potency of certain CSR models, some of which were part of this follow-up study (e.g., Success for All, Accelerated Schools, and Core Knowledge). Copper seems committed to Success for All for the long haul, but Crossover's commitment to Accelerated Schools and Sumac's commitment to Core Knowledge are fading. Perhaps in the short term, systematic and well-designed local pupil assessments should be given more credence. In the long term, hopefully, the state-mandated tests will reflect the results of individual pupil assessments.

Rural Influences

As observed in the predecessor study (Carlson, 2000), a significant portion of rural schools face "conditions of limited resources, isolation, declining enrollments, aging facilities, limited

curricula, and diminishing political influence. Sparsity, diseconomy of scale, extra transportation costs, and declining rural wealth further exacerbate efforts at school reform at the local rural school level" (p. 2).

Though schools in other locations face similar or comparable conditions, the predecessor study focused on what influence this rural context might have on the capacity of rural schools to reap the benefits of the CSR federal grant program. That study concluded that the rural context did not seem to negatively influence school implementation of CSR programs—in fact, the small nature of rural schools seemed to facilitate program implementation. This could be explained in part by such components of the CSR grant program as significant extra funding, a three-year guarantee of funding, and the commitment of developers to serve all schools regardless of location.

But with the end of the CSR grant period and the confusion surrounding No Child Left Behind federal funding, the schools in this study face an uncertain future regarding their comprehensive school change efforts. Their inadequate financial resources, isolation, and small numbers make it difficult for them to wield substantial political influence, which results in a more vulnerable condition. These schools demonstrated throughout their CSR grant periods that they could acquire competent and committed consultant help, often closely located at a nearby university. However, without adequate funding, these services will end and the schools will once again become isolated. As Beeson and Strange (2000) observed:

> Fully one quarter of America's school-age children attend public schools in rural areas or small towns. But if you listen to the education policy debate, chances are you will not hear much about them. In most of the 50 states, it is the education of urban children that gets nearly all of the attention. This report aims to adjust that picture by bringing rural schools and communities into focus. Rural kids, their schools, and their communities do matter. And in many states, action on behalf of rural schools needs to be an urgent priority. (p. 65)

The rural schools in this study demonstrated that they could make significant changes and get results with their CSR grant programs. But to sustain these improvements, these schools need more resources for longer than just three years. The schools were fully aware of the short-term nature of their CSR grants, but financial constraints, which are pervasive in rural areas, returned to the forefront as a major hurdle at the conclusion of their grants. To say they should have prepared for this eventuality overlooks the enormous pressure on rural schools to comply with state mandates on limited state aid and/or local property values. This is not an easy problem to solve, particularly during a period of declining revenues. However, the future of children in rural areas, living at or below the poverty level, depends on educators finding solutions.

Implications of the Study

This study answered some questions about the potential of packaging federal monies in such a way that local school faculty found them attractive to pursue. The CSR programs exhibited a good balance of financial support, classroom practice change, and support for the use of scientifically based educational interventions. The CSR grant program acknowledged the importance of the combination of public policy, professional practice, and educational research.

Public Policy

All of the states involved in this study have embarked on proscribing educational standards for all schools (including rural schools) and state-mandated tests to measure the degree to which the local schools are meeting state standards. This policy change has had significant impact on the once sacrosanct notion of "local control." This study shows that classroom teachers and school administrators are feeling very constrained by these new policies and the consequences of not attaining acceptable levels of performance as defined by the state. In the short term, the study suggests that the consequences of these new directions are not fully understood. No school wishes to be identified as a failing or low-performing school, and the schools in the study have made some real strides and showed early signs of improved test performance. But the issue of adequate resources to continue this momentum, particularly in a period of state-level deficit spending, is a major concern.

Professional Practice

The study of the five schools shows that CSR programs greatly impacted the professional practice of teachers. Teachers were very open about the skills and knowledge they did not have prior to the implementation of their CSR programs. They talked about how much the consultants were able to inform them in this regard. But possibly more importantly, these teachers discovered that their past practices and personal beliefs led them to greatly underestimate the learning potential of their students. The issue that this raises is how ordinary teachers, who have taught for many years, learn that their views of pupil potential are wrong. So often teachers are skeptical of new instructional and curriculum initiatives. Scientifically based programs help persuade teachers of their potential by showing them the success these programs generated in schools like their own. Allocating time for sufficient planning and inservice that is free of distractions can help as well. Each of these supports is important, however, these strategies still may fail if teachers are not inclined to support new instructional practices.

For example, a second-grade teacher at one of the schools in this study was absolutely convinced the new math program she was asked to use was unworkable and the children would suffer as a result. She had participated in the decision to select this program and in a graduate course design session to provide her with the adequate understanding to teach the new math program, but she struggled with her feelings toward the program. Then she discovered that her pupils were making strides she never before witnessed with her more traditional math program and —most importantly to her—they understood what they were doing. This teacher soon became a resident expert on the new program and was often used by the math consultant (a professor at a nearby university) as a substitute instructor in her university classes. During the interview with this teacher, she openly admitted to this transformation and showed great enthusiasm for her new perspective. This example of eventual acceptance of a new approach is a reminder of the importance of time and patience and, in part, explains why it takes so long to successfully implement needed changes. As long as teachers play a central role in determining what practices are followed in a school, educational leaders must find ways to gain acceptance for new initiatives.

Further Research

As desirable as it may be to follow these five schools over a longer period of time, it might be equally desirable to conduct more in-depth individual interviews of teachers in these schools. This would provide an opportunity to study the psychosocial variables that contributed to teacher

openness and acceptance of the changes involved in implementing their CSR programs. The study showed that some factors—teachers' playing a role in the choice of the CSR intervention, receiving ongoing assistance from competent consultants, getting support from school administrators, and, probably most importantly, seeing their students progress at levels they had not experienced before—had an effect on teacher acceptance. The significance of each of these factors for each teacher can be determined only through one-on-one interviews.

Final Comments

This report reflects the experiences of ordinary educators involved in the day-to-day routine of teaching young people often under difficult circumstances. Some teachers had to be challenged to stretch their capabilities further than they ever had before. Others were ready and willing to accept the opportunities their CSR grants provided. In either case, the CSR grant program overall provided teachers and their students with new opportunities they may not have had without outside federal and state financial and logistical support. If the status quo is to be broken, CSR-like efforts are essential to stimulate new instructional efforts that have the potential to make a difference in student learning. Most rural areas are strapped for additional resources to initiate such efforts. Grant programs of this magnitude appear to have tremendous potential for creating educational opportunities and to be worthy of replication in rural areas.

References

Beeson, E., & Strange, M. (2000, Fall). Why rural matters: The need for every state to take action on rural education. *Journal of Research in Education, 16*(2), 63–140.

Berman, S. J., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1978). *Federal programs supporting educational change,* 8, Santa Monica, CA: Rand.

Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2002, November). *Comprehensive school reform and student achievement: A meta-analysis, 59.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.

Carlson, R. V. (2000, November). *Case studies of rural schools implementing comprehensive school reform models.* Unpublished manuscript. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Crandall, D. P., Loucks-Horsley, S., Baucher, J. E., Schmidt, W. B., Eiseman, J. W., Cox, P. L., Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., Taylor, B. L., Goldberg, J. A., Shive, G., Thompson, C. L., & Taylor, J. A. (1982). *Peoples, policies, and practices: Examining the chain of school improvement* (Vols. 1–10). Andover, MA: The NETWORK.

Carnegie Corporation of New York (2002). *The Annenberg challenge: Lessons and reflections on public school reform.* Unpublished manuscript. NY, NY: Author.

Datnow, A., Borman, G., & Stringfield, S. (2000). School reform through a highly specified curriculum: A study of the implementation and effects of the Core Knowledge Sequence. *The Elementary School Journal, 101*, 167–192

Edmonds, R. R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership, 37*(1), 15–24.

Merriam, S. B. (1991). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Morgan, Q. (2002). *Education state rankings, 2002-2003.* Lawrence, KS: Author.

Stringfield, S., Millsap, M., Yoder, N., Schaffer, E., Nesselrodt, P., Gamse, B., Brigham, N. Moss, M., Herman, R., & Bedinger, S. (1997). *Special strategies studies final report.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Appendix A

Copper Elementary School
Copper, New Mexico

The following post-CSR grant study summary of Copper Elementary School was compiled through interviews with Copper ...ff and externa! trainers; a one-day, on-site visit with classroom observations; and a review of reports and related documents. The summary begins with background on the State of New Mexico, the community of Copper, and Copper Elementary School. A brief description of Copper's CSR program follows along with a summary of interviews with Copper staff and outside trainers. This report also presents and examines student test performance results for the three-year period of the grant, 1999–2002.

State of New Mexico
A recent report titled *Education State Ranking for 2002–2003* (Morgan Quitno, 2002) ranks New Mexico 50th based on 21 factors, 13 of which were considered positive factors and the remainder negative. Several factors showed very low performance in the percent of public elementary and secondary current expenditures used for instruction (55.8 percent versus a national average of 60.9 percent), per pupil public elementary and secondary school current expenditures ($5,748 versus a national average of $6,835), percent of public school fourth and eighth graders proficient or better in math (12 percent versus a national average of 25 percent and 13 percent versus a national average of 26 percent, respectively), and average salaries of public school classroom teachers in New Mexico ($33,785 versus a national average of $43,335). On the positive side, New Mexico exceeds the national ratio of public elementary and secondary school revenue per $1,000 personal income ($57.63 versus $48.05).

Beeson and Strange (Fall, 2000), in their research on the rural characteristics for each of the states, provide an additional perspective on New Mexico:

> New Mexico ranks first in rural student poverty and third in rural student minority rates . . . With relatively low rural teacher salaries (but close to par with non rural teachers), low rates of Internet access in rural schools, over one fourth of rural schools with declining enrollment, and over one third of rural adults with less than 12 years of schooling, New Mexico's need for an explicit rural education policy is urgent. (p. 101)

The context of the State of New Mexico reveals some added challenges facing rural schools like Copper.

Community of Copper
Copper is located in the southwestern region of New Mexico in a mountainous area known for its copper mining and cattle ranching. The community is situated in a broad river valley including wilderness and a desert plain. A few residential buildings sit near Copper Elementary School. The community also includes a national forest district office, volunteer fire department, senior center, and two post offices. Retiree, religious, ranching, farming, mining, artist, and "intentional" communities form a total population of 600 people in the Copper River Valley. Because of its

isolation and sparseness, many children must travel up to 25 miles to the school, which is at the center of social enclaves that stretch along a 50-mile-long valley.

The community is nearly split between Hispanic and white citizens. The median per capita income is $7,300 with an average income of $17,400. The unemployment rate is running nearly 12 percent in part caused by the recent closings of the copper mines located in Copper. Because of the lack of job opportunities and low-paying jobs, more than half of the population receives some type of public assistance.

Copper Elementary School

The physical appearance of Copper Elementary School has not changed over the past two years. A gravel parking lot where buses enter through a chainlink fence dominates the front section of the school. The school was built in 1973 with a single floor plan that includes 11 classrooms, a gym and kitchen on the perimeter, a library/media center complete with a computer lab, and a core area that provides space for the principal, secretary, nurse, and counselor. The playground is located behind the building on a dirt surface. Arid climate conditions preclude much greenery or landscaping. For a building nearly 30 years old, it is clean, brightly lighted, and well maintained.

Current enrollment for grades K–5, plus a special education class taught by four classroom teachers and a special education teacher, is in the mid-seventies. The school has a half-time counselor. Shrinking fiscal resources have necessitated a multi-graded plan and the closing of two classrooms that were constructed and opened two years ago.

The ethnic breakdown for the students is 52 percent Hispanic and 48 percent white; 19 percent is limited English proficient; and a female is the head of the household for approximately 53 percent of the families. More than 70 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Copper's CSR Model

Copper Elementary School faculty chose Success for All as the main component of their CSR grant. The program received widespread support among Copper educators when compared to other programs, though some faculty members took a wait-and-see attitude. Success for All is a comprehensive approach to ensure the success of every child. The program emphasizes prevention and early intervention to anticipate and solve any learning problems. Success for All draws on a research-based curriculum; extensive professional development in proven strategies for instruction, assessment, and classroom management; one-on-one tutoring for children who need it; and active family support approaches. Success for All requires a full-time facilitator who helps faculty and staff implement the program. This person also is responsible for organizing and monitoring the eight-week assessments that are the basis for the regrouping of children based on reading level and need. Because of the CSR model's strict protocols and teaching strategies, professional development is an essential component to the successful implementation of the program. Success for All requires three consecutive days of training for all teachers before the program begins as well as three regular, prescheduled two-day visits during the first year of implementation. These visits are tailored to teaching staff needs and include classroom visits, coaching, and team meetings. Between visits, Success for All consultants are available for telephone consultations.

Research Questions

Five general questions guided the inquiry process. These questions were used in the interviews of staff and external consultants. Each question is listed below along with a summary of what was learned from these interviews and related documents and/or reports.

Question 1: Reflecting on your school's CSR model, what was or was not implemented over the three years of the grant?

Copper Elementary School faculty nearly fully implemented Success for All in grades K–5, including the special education students, who were fully integrated into the Success for All reading groups. As required by Success for All, students moved to different classrooms to their assigned reading groups for 90 minutes each day five days a week. Back-to-back classroom observations confirmed all the teachers followed the Success for All protocols and language very closely.

For most of the grant, Title I funds supported a full-time facilitator. She was instrumental in assisting teachers with teaching techniques, eight-week assessments, and the establishment of reading groups. She also acted as a liaison with Success for All consultants. The Copper staff fully participated in the inservice training provided by Success for All consultants and spoke highly of their assistance in guiding the successful implementation of the program.

Copper Elementary School faculty did not fully implement some aspects of Success for All. They were unable to recruit, train, and pay tutors to help with the instructional program. Also, the facilitator position was not safeguarded—she is teaching a kindergarten-first grade combination class with some release time to conduct the eight-week assessments. Copper faculty members also had difficulty implementing the parent cooperation and support aspects of the program. Though this improved toward the third year of the grant, it still was not at the optimal level.

Despite these difficulties, Copper's teachers were successful in reducing the number of readers below grade level to one group, while the rest of children were at or above grade level.

Question 2: What seemed to enable your implementation plans and, if appropriate, what seemed to prevent implementing aspects of your CSR model?

Factors that Contributed to CSR Implementation

From the beginning, Copper Elementary School staff, including the principal, set a good tone with their involvement, cooperation, and commitment that continued throughout the implementation of Success for All. A few teachers worried they could not meet the challenge of the program's instructional methodology and exhibited some concern about being so tightly programmed. These apprehensions faded as the faculty improved their understandings of the program and the teaching skills required for its implementation over time.

Much of the faculty success can be attributed to several factors:

- Faculty participation in the selection of their CSR program
- Principal encouragement and support for initiating the new reading program

- A facilitator who provided the day-to-day support and assistance in diagnosing reading problems and suggesting appropriate interventions
- The Success for All consultant team that guided the faculty wisely and with sensitivity

Other factors that further enhanced the implementation of Success for All included
- ample reading materials and books for all reading levels,
- an uninterrupted 90-minute period each day for reading instruction only,
- district-level workshops that focused on individual students and their progress, which further reinforced the need for close monitoring of student performance, and
- home visits to kindergarten parents to explain the Success for All program and to enlist their cooperation.

Factors that Impeded CSR Implementation
The size of the Copper Elementary School staff prevented having enough teachers to teach the different classes needed to address the varying performance levels of their students. This has resulted in the teachers' handling more than one reading group and larger than normal reading groups. Copper's financial situation also prevented maintaining the site facilitator on a full-time basis and hiring extra teachers and/or adult tutors. Though it is not essential for the Success for All program, the school has not been able to establish an Internet connection that would facilitate research and access to online support.

Question 3: What role did the developer(s) (or consultants) play in carrying out your plans?

Copper Elementary School staff praised the team of consultants that the school received through their Success for All contract, which called for eight days of training broken down to two trainers for two-day training sessions twice a year. These trainers requested student assessment data beforehand to cross check reading group assignments, solicited teacher questions at the beginning of training sessions, and provided critical but supportive classroom observations. One teacher reported that the strictness of the consultants helped build her confidence to implement Success for All techniques. Consultants delivered a written report after each visit to the school. Copper faculty said the Success for All team was sensitive to Copper's small size and helped them work around some of the financial issues.

Question 4: What impact do you feel the implementation of your CSR model has had on students' progress, the teachers, the school, the parents, and the community?

Students
- Showed marked improvement in the acquisition of reading skills
- Involved in fewer discipline incidents
- Developed comfort level with aspects of the Success for All program, flowed easily to different classrooms to work with different teachers, and appeared to appreciate pairing and sharing opportunities
- Performed at ninth-grade level (top readers)
- Showed increased interest in reading through greater use of library books and frequency of students reading on the playground during recess

- Improved writing skills (fifth graders especially showed an appreciation of analogies and similes)

Copper's Success for All program delivered as promised. Students showed significant gains in reading skills as evidenced by their eight-week assessments and teacher observations. Students were performing at reading levels not experienced in the past.

Teachers

- Developed a commitment to full Success for All implementation and invested the extra time needed for its success
- Changed teaching methods and transferred some of the Success for All methods to the teaching of other subject areas
- Grew professionally and learned to work more closely as a team of teachers
- Recognized the value of monitoring individual student progress on a consistent and timely basis
- Grew to appreciate the strengths of the Success for All program to address the needs of traditionally low-performing students

As one teacher expressed it, "It was the best thing that could have happened to us." The student success with the Success for All program can be attributed to how much the teachers dedicated themselves to its implementation. Teachers spoke highly of the new methodology and as they observed progress in their students, they became fully convinced of the Success for All program's ability to deliver on its promises.

Schools

- Used Success for All teaching techniques to impact other subject areas (e.g., math, science, social studies)
- Reduced discipline incidents from 130 to three, which involved only 16 students
- Generated greater comfort levels in the classrooms by valuing pupil dialogue and responses
- Managed larger student assemblies more easily
- Used a point system to reward the good behavior of students

The new teaching methods learned through the Success for All program appeared to transfer to other subjects and to the treatment of students in general. This had a positive influence on the school and reduced some of the behavior problems of the past.

Parents

- Showed increased interest in their children's reading and participated more by listening to their children read
- Responded well to new parent Success for All orientation sessions
- Reacted well to earlier evidence of successful reading skills and interest in reading
- Displayed increased support and a more positive attitude toward the school

Though there was some parent apathy in the earlier stages of implementation of Success for All, some of this waned and parents grew more supportive.

Community

- Garnered sufficient financial support to maintain some modified contractual arrangement with Success for All consultants
- Awarded certificates to students and their families, teachers, and board members for their respective contributions in the school achieving a higher status in the statewide accountability system

The school board was impressed by test score improvements and expressed their support to the principal. The principal made a very conscious effort to acknowledge the importance of the school board's support along with that of other community leaders, including the school district superintendent.

Question 5: Now that the grant period has ended, what aspects of your CSR model will continue and what will not? Other plans for the future?

Copper Elementary faculty members have made a strong commitment to maintain and continue the Success for All program. Several teachers said they gained a great deal professionally and added they would like to continue their involvement with the Success for All consultants. The teachers reported that they feel empowered and are being encouraged to select from a menu of Success for All training topics and to opt out of district-wide training sessions. The principal spoke of seeking additional funding to help in the hiring of tutors and/or an extra classroom teacher to address multiple reading levels.

Student Test Score Results

The New Mexico Department of Education requires an outside CSR program evaluation at the conclusion of the three-year grant period. The data that follows were taken from Copper's CSR program evaluation completed on May 29, 2002. Table 4 reflects Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills results for four years including the three years of the CSR grant. Table 5 displays Success for All Test Results and Table 6 includes New Mexico Writing Assessment Holistic Scores.

Table 4: Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills Median National Percentile Results, 1998–2002

Grade Level	Subject Area	1998–1999 Percentiles	1999–2000 Percentiles	2000–2001 Percentiles	2001–2002 Percentiles
1	Reading	No Results	28	No Results	93
	Lang. Arts	No Results	43	No Results	85
	Math	No Results	29	No Results	74
2	Reading	52	No Results	55	No Results
	Lang. Arts	57	No Results	54	No Results
	Math	49	No Results	51	No Results
3	Reading	75	68	No Results	45
	Lang. Arts	70	60	No Results	26
	Math	78	72	No Results	28
4	Reading	69	65	73	86
	Lang. Arts	64	74	53	86
	Math	50	56	61	79
5	Reading	53	63	79	74
	Lang. Arts	49	50	55	72
	Math	55	63	59	67

Note. No results are reported for fewer than 10 students.

The review of national percentile rankings in Table 4 over time (1998–1999 to 2001–2002) shows improvement in test results except at the third-grade level. At the other grade levels, first grade for example, the table shows a dramatic increase in scores from the 1999–2000 28th percentile ranking in reading to the 2001–2002 92nd percentile ranking. A similar gain is indicated in reading for grades 4 and 5 as well. When making peer/cohort comparisons, the gains are not as dramatic. For example, first graders scored at the 28th percentile rank in reading in 1999–2000. When they moved to second grade in 2000–2001, their results rose to the 55th percentile. But in third grade, this same cohort scored only at the 45th percentile.

A more promising set of gains is displayed in reading for second graders in 1998–1999 (52nd percentile rank). These students scored at the 68th percentile in third grade, the 73rd percentile in fourth grade, and the 74th percentile in fifth grade. The third graders of 1998–1999 also show some slight gains by fifth grade (75th percentile versus 79th percentile). These test data show an overall trend of improved performance on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills.

Throughout Success for All implementation, each child's reading level was evaluated every eight weeks. The results displayed in Table 5 reflect the percentage of students who are reading at or above grade level at the end of the year.

Table 5: Percentage of Students Reading At or Above Grade Level Using Success for All Test Results, 1999–2002

Grade Level	1999–2000 Percent	2000–2001 Percent	2001–2002 Percent
1	55	63	50
2	75	70	57
3	71	100	67
4	82	81	67
5	82	91	90

The results organized by grade cohort groups show a general gain in the percentage of students reading at or above grade level. For example, 55 percent of first graders in 1999–2000, the first year of the Success for All program, were reading at or above grade level. This cohort of children scored 70 percent in second grade and 67 percent in third grade. Second graders in 1999–2000 scored 75 percent the first year, a dramatic 100 percent the second year, and 67 percent the third year. The third graders followed a more normal progression in improving the number of children reading at or above grade level by the fifth grade. They scored 71 percent the first year, 81 percent the second year, and 90 percent the third year. Generally, the table shows improvement in the percentage of students reading at or above grade level during the three years of the CSR grant.

Table 6 shows the percentage of children who scored at levels 1–6 on the New Mexico Writing Assessment Holistic Test for the years 1998–2001. Test results for 2002 were not available. The holistic score includes sentence formation, mechanics, word usage, and development.

Table 6: Percentage of Students Who Scored at Levels 1–6 on New Mexico Writing Assessment Holistic Test, 1998–2001

Holistic Score	1998 Percent	1999 Percent	2000 Percent	2001 Percent
1	0	0	0	0
2	19	0	18	17
3	57	46	73	50
4	19	46	9	17
5	0	9	0	17
6	5	0	0	0

Table 6 reveals that no children performed at a holistic score of 1. At the other extreme, only 5 percent scored at a holistic score of six in 1998. Thus, the students tend to cluster in the middle range of holistic scores. For example, when combining holistic scores of 3 and 4 over time, there is an increase in this range (77 percent, 90 percent, 81 percent, 66 percent) for the respective years of 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Year 2001 shows particular improvement with 17 percent of the students receiving a holistic score of 5. These results reflect improvement over time.

Final Comments

Copper Elementary School took on a difficult program (Success for All) to master, met the challenge, and has results to demonstrate the effort paid off. The teachers' involvement from the beginning in choosing their CSR model helped obtain the kind of commitment necessary to face the challenge associated with learning a new reading program and its prescribed methodologies. Having the entire faculty involved from the start, including the special education teacher and her students, helped establish a support team. A full-time site coordinator and trainers from the Success for All national program provided further support. These factors combined to sustain the faculty through difficult moments and kept everyone on task. The eight-week assessments were maintained and done in a timely manner, which permitted the establishment of homogeneous reading groups that crossed grade level assignments. After a difficult beginning, the school showed gains in parent support in years 2 and 3 of grant. The faculty improved such processes as establishing a safety plan, making phone calls to parents when students were absent, organizing team meetings and entertainment events and student performance programs that engaged parents and families, and creating success cards and recognizing families for their contributions to the achievement of perfect attendance.

The Success for All trainers did find some areas that need improvement. They said teachers needed to model higher-level thinking and reading strategies for student use and post student writings in classrooms and throughout the school. Trainers also were concerned about the

school's ability to recruit sufficient tutors to work with students experiencing some lag in their reading progress.

In conclusion, the CSR program evaluation stated:

> The CSR grant supports ties to both the district EPSS goals and the individual campus improvement plan. Progress continues to be made toward achieving the goals stated in the improvement plan. Although there continues to be areas of concern, overall, parents, teachers, and administrators are very pleased with the program. Students are making very good progress in most content areas as demonstrated on multiple assessments.

This shows that the Copper Elementary School faculty members made the right choice for their intervention program and obtained the desired results in spite of their small size and limited fiscal and human resources.

Appendix B

Crossover Elementary and Secondary Schools
Crossover, Texas

The following post-CSR grant study summary of Crossover elementary and secondary schools was compiled through interviews with Crossover staff and an external trainer; a two-day, on-site visit with classroom observations; and a review of reports and related documents. The summary begins with background on the State of Texas, the community of Crossover, and Crossover elementary and secondary schools. A brief description of Crossover's CSR program follows along with a summary of interviews with Crossover staff and the outside trainer. This report also presents and examines student test performance results for the three-year period of the grant, 1999–2002.

State of Texas

A recent report titled *Education State Ranking for 2002–2003* (Morgan Quitno, 2002) ranks Texas 16th based on 21 factors, 13 of which were considered positive factors and the remainder negative. Several factors that placed Texas in the top of half of her sister states were public elementary and secondary school revenue per $1,000 personal income ($53.55 versus national ratio of $48.05), percent of public school fourth graders proficient or better in math (27 percent versus national average of 25 percent) and in reading (29 percent versus national average of 29 percent), and average class size in public elementary schools (18.5 per class versus national average of 21.2). On the negative side, weak performance was observed in the following areas: percent of population graduated from high school (79.2 percent versus national average of 84.1 percent), average salaries of public school classroom teachers ($38,361 versus national average of $43,335), and high school dropout rate (5.0 percent versus national rate of 4.8 percent).

Beeson and Strange (Fall, 2000), in their research on the rural characteristics for each of the states, provide an additional perspective on Texas:

> Over 3.3 million people live in rural Texas (ranked second), but that is only 20 percent of the state's population, making it far less "rural" demographically than most states. Only one tenth of its students attend school in a rural community, but more than one third qualify for free lunches and nearly one third are minorities. With a large population widely dispersed between big cities, Texas' rural schools are important to the educational performance of the state and clearly in need of policy consideration. (p. 113)

Community of Crossover

As observed by Beeson and Strange, the rural population in Texas is located near and surrounding many of the state's largest cities. This is particularly true of Crossover, which is located approximately 60 miles north of Houston near a major highway that shuttles goods between southeast Texas and the Midwest as far as Chicago. Crossover is a small town of approximately 350 people with an additional 3,000 people within a five-mile radius. The countryside is mostly forested with large pine trees—lumber is a major economic resource for the area. Crossover itself has only one restaurant and one industry, a company that refurbishes boxcars.

The lack of a robust local economy has resulted in a community with a modest income and a large percentage of low-income families. The household median income is $24,645, and more than a third of the families earn less than $15,000. The educational attainment level for the community reflects similar trends. Nearly 40 percent of the population older than 25 has less than a high school education. At the other end of the spectrum, just less than 10 percent of the population has four years or more of a college education. Crossover also experiences a high turnover rate of residents with 23 percent of the population being newcomers and 63 percent of the population having moved there within the last five years. In general, Crossover is a community composed of mostly low- to modest-income families, and nearby employment opportunities are very limited.

Crossover Elementary and Secondary Schools

The Crossover schools' physical facilities have been improved considerably from the last visit to the community in Spring 2000. The original building, which dates back to 1934 and currently houses the middle-level grades, has fresh paint on the window frames and interior walls. Its cracked windows have been repaired, the auditorium has been returned to its original condition, and a new library/media center has been built on the campus. The old library building has been converted to an art center, which offers expanded curricular options, including pottery classes. Other buildings housing the elementary grades and high school are well maintained.

For several years, Crossover enrollment experienced a decline. In 1997, Crossover had 329 students; in the school year 2001–2002, the schools had 277 students. However, enrollment spiked to 302 students during the 2002–2003 school year. This is attributed in part to Crossover's recently granted "exemplary" status and improved competitive position as revealed in its statewide achievement test scores. The student body is 33 percent African American, 21 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Native American, 1 percent Asian, and 44 percent Caucasian. These percentages reflect a slight increase in Hispanic students and a slight decline in Caucasian students. Seventy percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The district experiences an annual turnover of 20 percent of its student population and has an average class size is 25 students. The pupil-teacher ratio for all grades is 10:1.

At the beginning of Crossover's CSR grant in 1999, the Texas Education Agency rated Crossover's district as "academically unacceptable" as determined by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test results for grades 3–8 and 10. In 2002, the high school received "exemplary" status, the middle school received "acceptable" status, and the elementary school received "recognized" status. A further breakdown is included in the student test score results section. These results show Crossover's significant improvement in academic performance, which has removed the threat of a state takeover.

Crossover's CSR Model

Crossover faculty divided the CSR grant into two components—one addressed grades K–5 and the other grades 6–12. At the elementary level, staff primarily focused on the implementation of the Reading Renaissance program, which provided a framework for integrating reading and writing instruction using computers and volunteers. Accelerated Reader books and software were a major component of the Reading Renaissance program. To address more effective teaching methods, the staff received training in a Phi Delta Kappa program called Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement. To support these new efforts, funds were used for the acquisition of

computers and software, the establishment of a parent volunteer center and two computer labs with fiber optics connections to classrooms and Internet services, and teacher professional development activities.

At the middle and high school levels, faculty emphasized the Accelerated Schools model of their CSR activity. Accelerated Schools addressed the school mission, cooperation among staff members, teaching methodologies, and curriculum alignment and development. Middle and high school staff also worked to incorporate Reading Renaissance elements—which made greater use of computer-assisted instruction and adult voluntary teacher aides—and teacher inservice in gifted and talented and second-language teaching methods.

Research Questions

Five general questions guided the inquiry process. These questions were used in the interviews of staff and external consultants. Each question is listed below along with a summary of what was learned from these interviews and related documents and/or reports.

Question 1: Reflecting on your school's CSR model, what was or was not implemented over the three years of the grant?

Essentially, Crossover faculty fully implemented their CSR plans. At the elementary level, teachers used widely and endorsed enthusiastically the Accelerated Reader and Math programs. During the first year of the grant, all of the teachers were trained in Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement methods, and teachers conducted classroom observations of each other's teaching and application of Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement techniques. The schools purchased and made available the materials needed to support the Accelerated Reader programs in the individual classrooms or in the computer labs. Teachers also participated in inservice programs provided by a regional educational service center that supported their new emphasis on reading instruction.

With the assistance of a part-time "coach," faculty implemented the secondary-level portion of the CSR grant with various components of the Accelerated Schools model. According to the third-year evaluation, Crossover "demonstrated" implementation of two components (Taking Stock and Forging Vision) and is "developing" the remaining seven components (Unity of Purpose, Empowerment, Building on Strengths, Setting Priorities, Establishing Governance, Embedding Inquiry, and Powerful Learning). The coach's once-a-week visits kept the faculty focused on the various elements of the Accelerated Schools model and the application of suggested teaching methods in their respective classrooms. Accelerated Schools was particularly effective in getting parents and students involved, albeit somewhat at a lower level than desired, in the major committees that addressed the model and further clarified student needs.

Crossover established the parent center, which was successful in recruiting and training tutors to work with classroom teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels. In the first year of the center's operation, Crossover hired a director, who was instrumental in successfully recruiting 20 volunteers who provided up to 1,200 volunteer hours. The center also provided a setting for parents and adult members of the community to access computers, hold meetings, and borrow instructional materials. The center also sponsored GED and ESL classes.

The other major component of the grant was the implementation of computer technology. This involved the hiring of a computer technician who helped rewire all of the schools on campus with fiber optic cable; install three computer labs for the use of elementary, middle, and high school students; create intranet and Internet connections; and purchase classroom computers (four to five computers per classroom), printers, and scanners.

Crossover was successful overall in the implementation of their CSR plans. The CSR programs were fully implemented at the elementary level; seven out of nine components were in some state of progress and/or fully implemented at the secondary level.

Question 2: What seemed to enable your implementation plans and, if appropriate, what seemed to prevent implementing aspects of your CSR model?

Factors that Contributed to CSR Implementation

Leadership from the superintendent, the elementary school principal, and, to a lesser degree, the secondary school principal spurred on efforts to fully implement CSR plans. The superintendent urged his staff to face their low test performance realistically and to launch an effort to improve student performance. He and the elementary principal, who shared a good professional relationship with the superintendent, were successful in gaining teacher support from the beginning to implement the Reading Renaissance program. Secondary-level efforts did not have the same degree of teacher involvement and support for the Accelerated Schools model. During the first year of Crossover's grant, there was a difference between teacher acceptance and commitment at the two levels. The secondary school picture changed somewhat in the third year with the appointment of a new principal and the turnover of teachers who were less supportive of Accelerated Schools. Regardless, the leadership of these administrators created a context that moved their CSR efforts forward.

There is little doubt, however, that the reality of poor performance on the state-mandated TAAS put Crossover on alert of having to improve student performance or face a state takeover. During the first year of the grant, a state monitor was assigned to the school district because of this threat, which affected all the students and families served by the school. As test scores improved, the staff, especially at the elementary level, gained confidence in being able to overcome the learning difficulties that some of their students bring to school. The improvement in test scores was linked to the elementary school's new programs, and this link reinforced their effort. However, some of this success also could be attributed to the schools' focus on TAAS test items and tutoring students in all grades every day for a half hour prior to taking the tests. In fact, when the test results came in late during the first year of the CSR grant, teachers reported that the high school students in particular responded with high-fives and cheers never seen before. The threat of possible closure became a rallying point and prompted students to do their best on the tests.

Other factors that may have contributed to improved student performance include:

- Staff development provided by a regional educational agency and the on-site "coach" for Accelerated Schools program
- Infrastructure improvements, including cable hookup from classrooms to computer labs
- New instructional materials, including books, software, CDs, and videos that tied in directly to new instructional programs

- New equipment (e.g., computers, printers, and scanners) placed in each classroom as well as the computer labs
- Faculty cohesion and greater focus on instructional practices
- A full-time computer technician and a parent center director who provided direct support for classroom teachers
- Curriculum guides for each grade level (K–8) in math and language arts that defined expected outcomes and linked to TAAS

Factors that Impeded CSR Implementation
At the beginning of the CSR grant period, faculty complained of the stress caused by the feeling of trying too much too soon. Also, some secondary teachers felt excluded from the decision to pursue Accelerated Schools. They also believed too much emphasis was being placed on dialogue in study groups and not enough on the acquisition of needed instructional materials. Some of this abated as the implementation of their CSR components began to yield positive results. Also, the turnover of teachers and the high school principal reduced some of the negativism that plagued Accelerated Schools efforts at the beginning. School finances, however, reduced the level of involvement with the Accelerated Schools support system during the third year and will no doubt play a significant role in the future.

Question 3: What role did the developer(s) (or consultants) play in carrying out your plans?

The teachers at Crossover expressed a high level of satisfaction with the support and training they received from the various consultants involved with their CSR efforts. At the elementary level, a regional educational center provided several consultants that linked to their new programs in reading and math. This center was seen as very responsive to teacher needs. Center staff visited the school on a regular basis, observed and consulted in the classroom, and had a good rapport with the teachers. The successful implementation of new programs can largely be attributed to the technical support teachers received from this educational center.

At the secondary level, the "coach" or external facilitator was successful in keeping the teachers focused on Accelerated Schools through his weekly visits that included classroom observations and administrative support for the "cadres" or committees working on various tasks associated with the CSR program's implementation. Though the coach spoke of some discouragement in getting teachers to follow through on his training sessions directed at Accelerated Schools teaching methods, he felt over time teachers began to appreciate his suggestions. In fact, the faculty voted at the end of the second grant year to continue work with the coach. The coach believed the deciding moment occurred when the state test results were received toward the end of the second year. He felt the faculty came together as a team, and Accelerated Schools became more ingrained in the school's culture. In his trainings, the coach emphasized "don't sweat the details," which worked well with the secondary school faculty.

Question 4: What impact do you feel the implementation of your CSR model has had on students' progress, the teachers, the school, the parents, and the community?

Students

- Increased aspirations regarding academic performance and post-secondary educational opportunities
- Increased test performance
- Increased participation in distance-le...ning courses in advanced English
- Decreased discipline problems at the elementary school level
- Greater orientation toward independent instructional methods and related tasks at the elementary level

Crossover's CSR program impacted student behavior. As evidenced by their performance on the state-mandated tests, students improved their academic skills significantly, and they developed new attitudes toward academics that did not exist in the past.

Teachers

- Developed a sense of accomplishment and confidence in guiding student learning
- Developed an awareness of the value in having higher expectations for student performance whereas in the past they excused poor performance based on low SES and/or racial backgrounds
- Developed a sense of "coming together" in support of Accelerated Schools principles

Though teachers expressed some initial feelings of stress in attempting to address the new demands of CSR programs, they eventually believed the programs were worth the effort. They accepted the belief that they could impact their students' progress in a most positive way.

Schools

- Created a new curriculum coordinator position in the district resulting in the development of curriculum guides and alignment of curricula
- Increased school pride and care of facilities
- Constructed a new library with more space and purchased more than 3,000 new books to support the elementary school's new reading program

The improved physical appearance of the school buildings was a direct result of placing a greater emphasis on providing an environment conducive to learning.

Parents

- Participated in a new parent center that sponsored programs to support parent needs
- Participated in a new program (i.e., Even Start) targeted at preschool children and their parents

Crossover initiated their CSR grant program with a strong emphasis on parent involvement. This remained a priority throughout the grant period and resulted in parents and other adults volunteering in classrooms.

Community

- Recognized and supported the school's successful effort to improve TAAS test results

Crossover's apparent success and excellent results on the state-mandated tests had a side effect of attracting new students from bordering school districts. The increase in enrollment should have a positive impact on Crossover's financial situation.

Question 5: Now that the grant period has ended, what aspects of your CSR model will continue and what will not? Other plans for the future?

Despite turnover in the school's administration, including a new superintendent and principals at the elementary and secondary school levels, Crossover faculty want to continue their CSR efforts. The new administrators recognize the success of the past administration and wish to keep this momentum going. They also understand that Crossover's financial situation requires the acquisition of grants to support new programmatic efforts. The newly initiated Even Start program—which built upon the parent center program that was discontinued at the end of the CSR grant—resulted from a grant written by the secondary principal.

At the elementary level, teachers and the new principal will continue to support the Reading Renaissance and Accelerated Math programs. Staff recognize that they need to move beyond basic skills because of the state-mandated testing program's new emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. In fact, Crossover has agreed to be one of the trial schools for these newly designed tests.

Crossover will not renew their Accelerated Schools contract at the secondary level even though the external facilitator noted that research has shown the absence of regular external coach visits usually results in the demise of Accelerated Schools efforts. The high school principal expressed the desire to continue the program and hopes she can fulfill the role of coach. There are signs that academics are more appreciated at the school with a resurgence of interest in academic competitions, new courses in precalculus and sociology, exploration of new distance-learning courses, and an interest in PSAT classes. Plans are in place to introduce a new technology curriculum at grades 4 and 5 that focuses on keyboarding, word processing, and multimedia.

Student Test Scores Results

Texas requires all students to take the TAAS in grades 3–8 and 10 on an annual basis, and the results from these tests determine in part a school's accountability rating. The students are tested in reading, mathematics, writing, social studies, and science, and the minimum passing score is 70 percent. The TAAS scores for all students are combined with dropout rates and attendance rates when computing a school's rating. Schools must meet all requirements for a satisfactory rating schoolwide and by ethnic groups. A school's economically disadvantaged population also must meet standards. In other words, the school is rated according to how well its lowest-performing student group achieves. Annual improvement also factors into the final rating. The ratings are "exemplary" (minimum 90 percent passing on each subject), "recognized" (minimum of 80 percent passing on each subject), "acceptable" (minimum 50 percent passing on each subject), and "low-performing" (below 50 percent passing on each subject).

The following tables break Crossover's TAAS performance into two groupings of grades 3–5 (elementary level) and grades 6–8 and 10 (middle and secondary levels). Table 7 shows the TAAS results at Crossover by grade level in reading, mathematics, and writing for each of the three years of their CSR grant and the year preceding the grant. The percentage shown represents the percentage of students who successfully met the 70 percent minimum score requirement.

Table 7: Percentage of Students in Grades 3–5 Who Passed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, 1998–2002

Grade Level	Subject Area	1998–1999 Percent	1999–2000 Percent	2000–2001 Percent	2001–2002 Percent
3	Reading	50	88	100	95
	Math	27	44	46	89
4	Reading	63	84	100	88
	Math	59	88	100	88
	Writing	50	69	92	100
5	Reading	67	90	92	100
	Math	78	96	100	100

Note. Third graders scored an 89 percent when they were tested three years later in grade 6 (see Table 8).

The TAAS results are stunning whether compared on a year-to-year basis at the same grade level or on a cohort basis tracked into subsequent grade levels. In 1998–1999, one year before the CSR grant, the highest success rate was 78 percent (math in grade 5) and the worst rate was 27 percent (math in grade 3). This contrasts significantly with the 2001–2002 percentages. In this school year, the lowest rate is 88 percent (reading and math in grade 4) and the highest was 100 percent (writing in grade 4 and reading and math in grade 5). When examining grade cohorts over successive years, a similar pattern of improvement emerges. Only half of the third graders in 1998–1999 successfully met the 70 percent standard in reading. However, in subsequent years, that percentage moved to 84 percent in grade 4, 92 percent in grade 5, and 89 percent in grade 6 (see Table 8). A similar pattern emerges for other cohorts in reading and math through the last year of the grant.

Table 8 reports the secondary level 1999–2002 TAAS results in reading and math for grades 6–8 and 10 and in writing for grades 8 and 10.

Table 8: Percentage of Students in Grades 6–10 Who Passed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, 1999–2002

Grade Level	Subject Area	1999–2000 Percent	2000–2001 Percent	2001–2002 Percent
6	Reading	65	86	89
	Mathematics	73	100	94
7	Reading	83	88	88
	Mathematics	79	90	95
8	Reading	100	82	95
	Mathematics	95	78	95
	Writing	82	94	88
10	Reading	88	93	94
	Mathematics	88	100	89
	Writing	94	93	94

The results for the secondary grades are comparable to those for the elementary grades in that they generally show improvement throughout Crossover's CSR grant. As for cohort improvement, the sixth graders in 1999–2000 had a 65 percent success rate in reading, the seventh graders in 2000–2001 had an 88 percent success rate in reading, and the eighth graders in 2001–2002 had a 95 percent success rate in reading. These same sixth graders experienced a similar pattern of gradual improvement in math.

Overall, Crossover's students made marked improvement in their performance on the TAAS, which resulted in the secondary school obtaining an "exemplary" rating, the middle grades obtaining an "acceptable" rating, and the elementary grades obtaining a "recognized" rating. During their three-year CSR grant period, Crossover overcame their low-performing status and the threat of a state takeover of their schools.

Final Comments

Crossover's CSR grant accomplishments are noteworthy. Staff fully implemented all aspects of the elementary school plans and met most of their AS goals at the secondary level. Their TAAS test results drastically improved and changed the outlook for the school, staff, parents, and community members.

Crossover's performance is on the rise and will require further diligence to maintain momentum in part due to the State of Texas's exploration of new tests that are expected to place more emphasis on high-order thinking skills. Much of Crossover's success can be attributed to the programmatic and financial magnitude of its CSR grant. But one other effort may have played an equally important role: Crossover's staff and outside tutors focused on TAAS test items and related skills for a half-hour every day beginning in the Spring 2000 and continuing into the 2001 school year. The extra coaching and connection of test results to the future of Crossover's schools influenced students to give their best efforts.

Appendix C

Liberty Elementary and Secondary Schools
Liberty, Oklahoma

The following post-CSR grant study summary of the Liberty School District was compiled through interviews with Liberty staff and external trainers; a two-day, on-site visit with classroom observations; and a review of reports and related documents. The summary begins with background on the State of Oklahoma, the community of Liberty, and Liberty elementary and secondary schools. A brief description of Liberty's CSR program follows along with a summary of interviews with Liberty staff and outside trainers. This report also presents and examines student test performance results for the three-year period of the grant, 1999–2002.

State of Oklahoma

For the last two years, Oklahoma has been coping with a fiscal crisis. According to *The Daily Oklahoman* (9/17/02), the state is facing a quandary of how best to make a $213 million budget cut for the current fiscal year. The consequence of this income shortfall was education reductions. Liberty's aid was reduced 8 percent last year (2001–2002), and Liberty was required to return 4.6 percent this year (2002–2003). Further reductions of 12 percent to 18 percent were anticipated in January 2003.

A recent report titled *Education State Rankings for 2002–2003* (Morgan Quitno, 2002) ranks Oklahoma 32nd based on 21 factors, 13 of which were considered positive factors and the remainder negative. Reflective of the financial problems of the state, Oklahoma ranked 50th on the percent of public elementary and secondary current expenditures used for instruction (54 percent versus a national average of 60.9 percent) and 45th in per pupil public elementary and secondary school current expenditures in 2000 ($5,394 versus a national average of $6,835). This financial situation is further exacerbated by the fact that nearly 96 percent of school age children in Oklahoma attend public schools with a national average of 88 percent. In spite of these financial problems, Oklahoma schools did manage to nearly perform at national averages in reading in grades 4 and 8 in 1998.

Beeson and Strange (Fall, 2000), in their research on the rural characteristics for each of the states, provide an additional perspective on Oklahoma:

> Oklahoma ranks in the top third among states in five of eight "importance" indicators, including the percentage of schools and students in rural areas, the smallness of its schools, and the percentage of its students who are minorities (largely Native Americans). Its rural schools are the least "connected" to the Internet in the nation, rural poverty is widespread, and rural teachers' salaries are relative low. (p. 106)

The conditions outlined above, including the current health of educational finances in the State of Oklahoma, weigh rather heavily on small, rural communities like Liberty.

Community of Liberty

The community of Liberty is located southwest of Oklahoma City and is surrounded by a rolling, sparsely populated countryside and old and new oil well derricks. The school district covers 68 square miles with a density of 3.6 students per square mile and a population of 1,700.

Liberty's small community center also has experienced financial hardships. A revisit to the center of town reveals empty storefronts and a closed food market that were operating in Spring 2000. Approximately 70 percent of the schools' students are eligible for free/reduced-lunch subsidies (this is a 4 percent increase from 2000), and the average household income remains at $17,796, compared to the state average of $24,088. The local financial base provides approximately a quarter of the revenues needed to operate Liberty's schools. The remainder of the revenues comes from state (62 percent) and federal (14 percent) sources. Thus, Liberty's financial health has remained nearly the same while the state has experienced some significant income shortfall.

Liberty Elementary and Secondary Schools

Little change in the appearance of the three buildings used to house Liberty's students was seen between the first and last visits. They continue to show some wear and tear though they are clean on the interior. One of the buildings formerly used to house middle-level grades now encompasses an alternative school program, and grades 5 and 6 have moved into the elementary school building. The high school library has moved to the elementary school, where it is sharing space with the elementary school library. The former library space in the high school has been converted to a computer lab. The schools' enrollment has essentially remained the same at 244 students in grades preK–12. Its demographics have remained about the same as the community's 2000 demographics except for a slight decrease in the predominant Caucasian enrollment (88 percent versus 91 percent) and an increase in its small Native American population (10 percent versus 7 percent).

For financial reasons, Liberty reduced its staff size, which placed a heavier load on the remaining staff members. The high school principal was not replaced when he left; a teacher is serving as principal on a part-time basis. The elementary principal serves as treasurer to the school board. The high school has experienced a nearly 100 percent teacher turnover. This has impacted the implementation of related teaching methods associated with the Effective Schools Model. The elementary school staff has remained essentially the same. The superintendent and the librarian, who composed the prime force behind the CSR grant proposal and related activities, retired at the end of the school year in June 2002.

Liberty's CSR Model

Like other schools that received CSR funds, Liberty received $50,000 per year for three years, or a total of $150,000. Half of this money was committed to the Center for Effective Schools at the University of Oklahoma to provide staff training on the Effective Schools Model. This amounted to one day of preschool training, monthly training for all staff members, and leadership team training, including training for school administrators, on a quarterly basis and in the summer at the University of Oklahoma. Team members also visited the school twice a month to offer technical assistance and coaching. The Center for Effective Schools provided all training materials, including videos. The grant underwrote all staff development training, teacher stipends, and travel expenses.

The remaining funds were distributed over a number of projects. During the second year of the grant, CSR funds were used to purchase Accelerated Reader materials and software, chemistry and physical science curricular packages, keyboard software at the elementary level, and Internet service for 10 classrooms with printers.

Research Questions

Five general questions guided the inquiry process. These questions were used in the interviews of staff and external consultants. Each question is listed below along with a summary of what was learned from these interviews and related documents and/or reports.

Question 1: Reflecting on your school's CSR model, what was or was not implemented over the three years of the grant?

Evaluating Effective Schools Model implementation, which was a major focus of Liberty's CSR program, was a difficult task because of the ambiguity of what actually should take place within the Effective Schools Model's general philosophical framework. There are seven correlates that guided Liberty's effort to implement this model: safe and orderly environment, clear school mission, instructional leadership, high student expectations, opportunity to learn, monitoring student progress, and community involvement.

Teacher inservice meetings and leadership team training attempted to flesh out the seven indicators on a continuum of low to high impact. These discussions resulted in a consensus on the implementation in grades K–12 of various aspects of the seven correlates. Nearly everyone interviewed believed there was an increase in cohesion and mutual respect among the grade levels. Many stated that before embarking on CSR grant activities, Liberty staff experienced a significant gulf between the elementary and secondary school levels. Inservice meetings at which all members of the school staff, including administrators, shared their views and engaged in joint problem solving helped to remove some of the communication barriers. Liberty staff believe this was a major accomplishment that allowed a consensus to emerge on a number of school issues and generated teacher support for planned efforts across the board.

One example of the impact of a team effort was the development of the school's newly articulated mission statement. Building on an Effective Schools Model philosophy, the faculty focused on three keywords: "expects" ("We have high EXPECTations for all in their endeavors whether it is academics, athletics, or life."), "believe" ("We BELIEVE all can meet the high expectations."), and "achieve" ("ACHIEVEment is attained through high expectations, the belief we can attain them, a plan of action, and dedication to achieving our goals."). Staff made a significant effort to publicize the mission statement, including T-shirts, badges, laminated charts, a banner, and a painted logo of the school's mascot and the three keywords on the walkway leading into the high school building. The superintendent felt the new graphic portraying the school's mission was symbolic of the new spirit of cooperation that emerged from K–12 inservice meetings over the three years of the grant.

Other accomplishments shared by interviewees and reported in CSR reports to the Oklahoma State Department of Education include the following:

- Increased communication among the elementary school faculty members regarding pupil progress and ways to address those who were experiencing difficulty
- A vertical alignment of the K–12 curriculum for all subjects that helped informed textbook selection and was accomplished in workgroups of teachers for grades K–3, 4–6, 7–8, and 9–12
- The disaggregation of test results and an increased awareness of the special needs of students that should be attended to by the entire faculty
- Open discussions on instructional problems and schoolwide planning
- Teacher training in the Teacher Effectiveness and Student Achievement methodology
- Directed efforts at reducing pupil pullouts
- Purchase of Accelerated Reader books and software
- Installation of an Internet connection in each classroom
- Deregulated school calendar that provided time on alternate Wednesday afternoons for inservice and planning meetings
- Increased high school student aspirations for continuing their education beyond high school

The provision of an adequate Effective Schools Model orientation for parents and the school board was not fully address. A modest start was the establishment of a Parent Teacher Organization, in which 20 parents showed some interest. Staff felt that this lack of understanding by the school board and parents resulted in a lack of support for further changes, particularly if they involved spending money.

Question 2: What seemed to enable your implementation plans and if appropriate, what seemed to prevent implementing aspects of your CSR model?

Factors that Contributed to CSR Implementation

The inservice program presented by members of the University of Oklahoma (OU) Center for Effective Schools was the most influential factor in the implementation of Liberty's CSR program. Though they were not present at the school on a weekly basis as they were at some schools working with the center, the OU trainers saw and were impressed by the level of involvement and commitment of Liberty's staff. The entire faculty and administrators, including the superintendent, participated in monthly meetings, which facilitated the changes suggested by outside trainers. This was most evident when the elementary classroom teachers successfully lobbied the administration in the second year of the grant to invest in the purchase of Accelerated Reader materials and software.

Equally important, the teachers and administrators felt their "eyes were opened" on a number of issues concerning instructional practices that resulted in a greater focus on learner progress and outcomes. Several teachers noted the impact of disaggregating student test scores and appreciated the subtle instructional practices that explained different results with different children. In addition to the monthly all-staff inservice meeting, a leadership team composed of two elementary teachers, one middle school teacher, two high school teachers, and school principals met with OU trainers in Oklahoma City. Several spoke of the favorable impact that these meetings had on establishing cohesion and support for the Effective Schools Model.

Established time for the teachers to meet under less strain came out of the deregulated school calendar. The Department of Education permitted Liberty to extend their school day 20 minutes so that they could dismiss their students at 1:30 p.m. on alternate Wednesdays. This resulted in blocks of time for inservice and follow-up planning.

Factors that Impeded CSR Implementation

Some Effective Schools Model aspects did not receive the attention the staff and OU trainers desired and were not fully implemented. Having only one training session per month prevented the follow up needed and the on-site coaching of classroom teachers to address different teaching methodologies. Also, a small cadre of teachers who were not supportive of the Effective Schools Model introduced a negative voice in the process of change. This was eased by the departure of several disgruntled faculty members. This turnover silenced some resistance, but it created a need to orient teacher replacements to the CSR programs, which proved problematic in the third year of the grant. The school experienced a turnover of 14 out of 24 teachers.

As stated earlier, not being able to develop a greater understanding of Liberty's Effective Schools Model efforts and its needs with the school board and community leaders proved to be an impediment in its implementation. The board would neither support extra funding for needed curricular materials nor would they allow fund-raising activities. Effective Schools Model leaders felt the school board may have been more flexible on this issue if they had more fully understood Effective Schools Model tenets and the effort being put forth by the teachers.

Also during the third year of the grant, the superintendent and the librarian, key leaders in the grant activities, announced they would retire at the end of the school year. The librarian spoke of burnout and the superintendent appeared less engaged with Effective Schools Model goals. Consequently, new administrators have come on board, and they are preoccupied with the financial problems of a deficit budget. This does not bode well for further implementation of Effective Schools Model strategies.

Question 3: What role did the developers(s) (or consultants) play in carrying out your plans?

OU's Center for Effective Schools and its trainers played a major role in the implementation of Liberty's CSR plans. Liberty staff said the trainers were very professional, well prepared, supportive, and respective of the teachers' lack of exposure to Effective Schools Model research. Teachers said trainer suggestions were practical and helped them focus on the needs of their students and track their progress in a timely manner.

In turn, the OU trainers viewed the Liberty staff as committed to Effective Schools Model principles as they grew to understand them. The trainers knew Liberty staff members had to work under difficult conditions and within smaller budgets. The teachers exhibited less skill in some areas of group planning, but their dedication to the needs of their students helped them overcome these deficits to some degree. The OU trainers felt Liberty outperformed many of the other schools with whom they worked.

The center provided inservice training at the beginning of the school year and once a month thereafter. OU trainers also delivered on-site technical assistance and coaching two days a month. Again, the trainers wanted more time to work with teachers, but given the financial constraints of Liberty, they were pleased with the results. The superintendent, who chose the center to support Liberty's CSR plans, said the trainers and Liberty faculty worked well together.

Question 4: What impact do you feel the implementation of your CSR model has had on students' progress, the teachers, the school, the parents, and the community?

Students

- Improved in certain areas, especially reading at the elementary level, according to preliminary test results
- Increased aspirations toward post-secondary education as evidenced by a significant rise in scholarship aid requests by graduating students
- Involved in fewer discipline incidents, which was attributed to greater emphasis on assuming more responsibility for one's behavior (an outgrowth of work on mission statement)
- Increased expectations for their own academic performance (e.g., high school math class)
- Showed better preparation for high school work in math and reading
- Improved grade level in reading (first graders were at grade level during their first year of using the Accelerated Reader program; in the second year of Accelerated Reader, the subsequent classes of first graders were three to five months above grade level)
- Attended all-day programs to increase exposure to school (pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students)

Though the impact of Liberty's CSR program on students appears preliminary and limited, CSR efforts may have reached across all grade levels because the Effective Schools Model and related inservice used a comprehensive approach that targeted grades K–12.

Teachers

- Collaborated and focused more on ensuring the success of all students
- Gained a sense of "reinventing themselves" as teachers
- Changed teaching methods: moved from the lecture approach to question-and-discussion format, introduced reading in kindergarten, focused on learning styles, increased wait time for students to respond to questions, developed more patience with students, emphasized more hands-on activities and fewer worksheets
- Developed higher expectations for student performance
- Increased sharing of ideas with each other on teaching methods and student management

Classroom teachers at the elementary level felt the impact of Liberty's CSR grant the most. Nearly all of them spoke of being transformed by the staff development program, the new concepts presented, and related teaching methods. These helped teachers view their students and their teaching methods in new light. Teachers also spoke highly of the cross-grade dialogue that these new efforts stimulated. Staff experienced internal struggles between the elementary and secondary teachers in the past, but the CSR staff development activities reduced these conflicts and resulted in a greater level of mutual respect.

Schools

- Purchased new instructional materials in reading and Accelerated Reader program
- Added computers and Internet connections in each classroom
- Emphasized the continuity and alignment of curriculum more
- Eliminated the rivalry between elementary and secondary teachers
- Improved communications
- Developed a consensus and follow-through regarding the school's mission
- Improved appearance of the high school classrooms and teachers' room

Liberty has faced significant financial problems, and their CSR grant provided funds to purchase much-needed instructional materials and equipment. Liberty also paid more attention to the physical appearance of classrooms, especially in the high school facility.

Parents

- Developed greater expectations for their children to attend post-secondary programs
- Requested their children's participation in pre-ACT classes more frequently
- Involved less than the Liberty faculty had hoped

Though they did not make as big an impact on parental involvement as they had desired, staff said parents showed more interest in post-secondary level opportunities.

Community

- Involved less than the Liberty faculty had hoped
- Not fully informed about Effective Schools Model principles and planned changes

Lack of successful engagement with the community and school board resulted in some lack of support for additional funds requests and/or fund-raising efforts.

Question 5: Now that the grant period has ended, what aspects of your CSR model will continue and what will not? Other plans for the future?

Liberty CSR grant activities instilled a new spirit of change and improvement in the faculty that targets the needs of their students. Staff expect reading program gains to continue with the adoption of a Scotts-Foresman Four Block Program that includes Accelerated Reader as one of the blocks. The elementary teachers seem enthusiastic about this new program's emphasis on reading and about its potential in helping their students' continued growth. The elementary principal expressed a desire to examine more closely the school's math program since their test results have not been satisfactory and there seems to be an over reliance on worksheets. The teachers expect to continue their grant work by following Effective Schools Model correlates and pushing curriculum alignment with a whole-school focus. All of this is dependent on good internal communication among the Liberty staff, which many say is a high priority.

Because of financial reasons, Liberty will not continue their contract with the Effective Schools Center. This concerned the OU trainers, who were not too optimistic about the school's potential for maintaining their momentum in implementing aspects of the seven correlates. But the new administration is hopeful that recent grant opportunities will permit them to address the important

curricular needs of their students, particularly the new federal CSR initiative attached to the No Child Left Behind legislation.

Because of new administrators and financial constraints brought on by a reduction in state aid and a budget deficit inherited from 2001–2002, the future of other CSR plans are unclear. Efforts that are not dependent on new funds—monitoring student progress more closely, collaborating to address student needs, reflecting on teaching methods, and applying insights fostered by Effective Schools Model—will continue. Time will tell if the focus on pupil growth facilitated by a highly motivated faculty can prevail in tough economic times.

Student Test Score Results

The State of Oklahoma's Office of Accountability issues an annual school district report and school report card. These reports provide statistical information on their schools, including academic achievement test results. The following tables show test results for the year preceding the CSR grant and two years of the grant. The test results for the third year of the grant are not available. The third-grade results are from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and reported in national percentiles. The fifth- and eighth-grade results are from the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests and reported as a percentage of satisfactory responses. The tests administered in grade 11 have not been the same tests for each of the school years represented in the table, which precludes grade-level and cohort comparisons. Third graders were not tested in 2000.

Table 9: Grade 3 Iowa Test and Grades 5 and 8 Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test Percentile Results, 1999–2001

	Grade 3 Percentiles			Grade 5 Percentiles			Grade 8 Percentiles		
Year	Rdg	Lang	Math	Rdg	Wrtg	Math	Rdg	Wrtg	Math
1999	58	74	83	73	91	100	65	100	76
2000	NT	NT	NT	41	100	41	37	100	37
2001	69	62	62	94	88	61	70	100	70

The Oklahoma State Department of Education has established a 70 percent performance benchmark for the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests. Table 10 displays whether this benchmark has been met in grades 5 and 8 for the years of 1999–2001.

Table 10: Grades 5 and 8 Benchmark Performances on Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests, 1999–2001

Year	Grade	Math	Science	Reading	Writing	History	Geoghy	Arts
1999	5	met	met	met	met	met	met	met
	8	met	met	not met	met	not met	met	met
2000	5	not met	not met	not met	met	not met	not met	not met
	8	not met	not met	not met	met	not met	not met	not met
2001	5	not met	met	met	met	not met	not met	not met
	8	met	met	met	met	not met	not met	not met

The test results reported in tables 9 and 10 do not show any significant changes in test performance by Liberty students, keeping in mind that the test results for each grade level are a different cohort. Only the 1999 third graders were tested again as fifth graders in 2001, but they received a different set of tests, which precludes any comparisons over time for the same group of students. Table 10 shows that in 2001, the fifth graders do not meet the state's benchmark in math but they do meet the benchmark in reading, which also was the case in 1999. Liberty's 2001 fifth graders did not fall behind in reading, but this is not the case in other subject areas such as history, geography, and the arts.

Final Comments

Liberty's CSR program positively impacted the school by creating a more cohesive faculty, especially at the elementary level. Teachers spoke of having changed their teaching methods to engage their students in more active learning and to more closely monitor their progress. They acquired new materials for their elementary reading program and an Internet connection in each classroom. The elementary teachers, in particular, feel more empowered and are committed to the success of their students. At the secondary level, the picture is less clear partly because of teacher turnover, but some faculty indicated a disposition toward Effective Schools Model correlates.

As for demonstrating significant changes in test scores during this period of time, this is not possible presently. The elementary teachers did feel the results on STAR exams used with the Accelerated Reader program were showing real gains, but the ultimate test will be whether this performance transfers to improvements on the third-grade Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Liberty's most pressing concern now is solving their financial situation in the context of reduced state aid and a weak economy in Oklahoma. This could sidetrack their efforts at improving the curriculum and instructional strategies that require fiscal resources.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix D

Sugar Elementary School
Sugar, Louisiana

The following post-CSR grant study summary of Sugar Elementary School was compiled through interviews with Sugar staff and external trainers; a two-day, on-site visit with classroom observations; and a review of reports and related documents. The summary begins with background on the State of Louisiana, the community of Sugar, and Sugar elementary and secondary schools. A brief description of Sugar's CSR program follows along with a summary of interviews with Sugar staff and outside trainers. This report also presents and examines student test performance results for the three-year period of the grant, 1999–2002.

State of Louisiana

A recent report titled *Education State Ranking for 2002–2003* (Morgan Quitno, 2002) ranks Louisiana 49th based on 21 factors, 13 of which were considered positive factors and the remainder negative. The following factors showed very low performance: per pupil public elementary and secondary school current expenditures ($5,652 versus a national average of $6,835), public high school graduation rate (56 percent versus a national rate of 68.7 percent), the percent of fourth graders proficient or better in mathematics (14 percent versus a national average of 25 percent), and the percent of eighth graders proficient or better in mathematics (12 percent versus a national average of 26 percent). The picture for reading is not better: the percent of fourth graders proficient or better in reading is 19 percent versus 29 percent nationally, and the percent of eighth graders is 18 percent versus 31 percent nationally. Louisiana does have some favorable statistics: a pupil-teacher ratio (14.7 pupils per teacher versus a national ratio of 15.9) and average class size in both elementary and secondary schools (elementary: 18.9 pupils versus a national average of 21.2 pupils; secondary: 22.9 pupils versus a national average of 23.4 pupils).

Beeson and Strange (Fall, 2000), in their research on the rural characteristics for each of the states, provide an additional perspective on Louisiana:

> Louisiana has the third highest percentage of rural students in poverty in the nation and among the lowest average rural teachers' salaries. It also ranks among the top 10 states in the percentage of rural adults with less than a 12th-grade education. (p. 88)

Improving education in Louisiana is a daunting task in light of the above-mentioned statistics. Though not an encouraging picture, Sugar faced these odds and produced some interesting results.

Community of Sugar

With a population of 1,864, Sugar sits in the flood plain of the Mississippi River and is surrounded by sugar cane fields that provide the major source of employment in the region. The community itself has two residential properties of small white-frame buildings, a church, and school buildings. The town is known for low property wealth and a poverty level of existence. In 1989, the median income in Sugar was $15,878; 130 households have less than $5,000 income.

Students assigned to the school are drawn from four postal communities that are smaller than villages and have a limited number of residential homes. A vast majority of the residents in the parish where Sugar is located are descendants of slaves and have lived here or nearby for many generations. Approximately half of the people living in Sugar are African American, 1 percent is Hispanic, and the remainder is white. Approximately 25 percent of the adults in Sugar have less than a ninth-grade education and another 25 percent do not have a high school diploma. A considerably large percentage of the residents in Sugar and in other parts of the parish rely on public assistance.

Sugar Elementary School

Sugar Elementary School's appearance is pretty much the same as it was in 2000, the first year of Sugar's CSR project. The school shows a significant amount of wear and tear, but the individual classrooms reflect an active instructional program. The building was a junior-senior high school before it was chosen to house elementary classes only, and there are several buildings connected by covered walkways. The cafeteria and gymnasium building are located in the center of campus with the upper elementary grades located to the right of this facility and the primary grades to the left. One building is not in use and has boarded-up windows. These buildings were constructed before central air conditioning was common in southern schools, and the exterior walls are made mostly of windows that are now covered with blinds. Each room has a large air-conditioning unit attached to one of the windows that provides some relief from the heat and humidity so common in this area.

Of the 260-student population, approximately 88 percent is African American, 11 percent is white, and 1 percent is Hispanic. The average class size of 14.5 places the school well below the state average, and its student-teacher ratio of 20:1 is slightly higher than the state's average. The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch is 98 percent. Many of the pupils living in the Sugar Elementary School attendance area prefer to attend a nearby public enrichment school, two parochial schools, and a private school. Sugar Elementary School houses grades preK–6 and one special education class.

Sugar's CSR Model

The Early Literacy Initiative Project, supported and developed at Southeastern Louisiana University, is the primary focus of Sugar's CSR program. The Early Literacy Initiative Project uses a staff development model that includes a 10-day summer institute and on-site coaching and demonstrations offered by a site-coordinator throughout the academic year. The program emphasizes job-embedded structures to facilitate teacher acquisition of early literacy teaching skills and understandings. Job-embedded structures include reflective journals, grade-level networking, literacy management teams, action research, video critiques of teaching segments, analysis of student work, and study groups. The Early Literacy Initiative Project targets grades preK–3 and emphasizes reading, writing, and spelling skills. Reading Recovery and the Accelerated Reading program supported and reinforced the Early Literacy Initiative Project in Sugar.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Research Questions

Five general questions guided the inquiry process. These questions were used in the interviews of staff and external consultants. Each question is listed below along with a summary of what was learned from these interviews and related documents and/or reports.

Question 1: Reflecting on your school's CSR model, what was or was not implemented over the three years of the grant?

Sugar staff fully implemented and still use the Early Literacy Initiative Project in grades preK–3 as originally planned. The staff development model supported by Southeastern Louisiana State was also fully implemented. Nearly all teachers took advantage of the summer 10-day course; the on-site coordinator and teachers coached those who could not attend.

October 2002 classroom observations confirmed widespread use of Early Literacy Initiative Project teaching techniques in reading, writing, and spelling. The children were very familiar with the Early Literacy Initiative Project routine, especially the group-guided reading exercise. Evidence of comprehension, word attack skills, spelling practice, and writing was found in personal journals. The children moved comfortably through these various activities and displayed understanding and successful performance. Teachers also spoke favorably about the staff development and job-embedded training built into the Early Literacy Initiative Project and supported by Southeastern Louisiana University. Staff felt the on-site coordinator was responsive, the faculty study groups were supportive of team building and exchanging ideas, and the action research project was effective in showing how subgroups of students were experiencing positive growth. Faculty fully implemented the Early Literacy Initiative Project, including purchasing reading materials and other instructional aids, and made an effort to seek parent support and assistance by presenting two family literacy nights.

Other accomplishments that were expressed by teachers during interviews include:

- Continued teacher training and classroom-embedded inservice for newly hired teachers
- On-site coordinator who visited two consecutive days per month throughout the grant, provided classroom support—including demonstration lessons, and responded to telephone inquiries
- Extensive use of student journals to practice writing by completing stories, reviewing stories, and/or creating stories
- Links to other grants and reading programs to support the Early Literacy Initiative Project especially for children in first grade experiencing some developmental lag
- Acquisition of teaching skills in reading that improved teachers' confidence and professionalism
- A session focused on guided reading in grades 3–6 that convinced teachers of the effectiveness of the Early Literacy Initiative Project and generated a strong desire to extend the project into grades 4–6
- Acquisition of writing and balanced literacy software for classroom computers

Sugar's CSR project was fully implemented and has been well received by the faculty.

Question 2: What seemed to enable your implementation plans and if appropriate, what seemed to prevent implementing aspects of your CSR model?

Factors that Contributed to CSR Implementation

As suggested in response to the first question, the implementation of Sugar's CSR grant hinged heavily on the job-embedded staff development model supported by Southeastern Louisiana University. The components of this model provided the necessary support, teacher skill development and confidence, and knowledge needed to successfully implement all aspects of the Early Literacy Initiative Project. An on-site coordinator, who was seen as non-threatening and competent, provided the necessary follow up to strengthen teacher skills in implementing the Early Literacy Initiative Project. The faculty fully supported the program and approached implementation with a strong commitment up front. The creation of an Early Literacy Management Team composed of the principal, trained Early Literacy Initiative Project classroom teachers including the Reading Recovery teacher, and the on-site Early Literacy Initiative Project coordinator provided the necessary leadership to keep the faculty focused on the mission of successful implementation of early literacy. They also provided school-based training for teachers who were unable to attend the summer course and/or who were new to the school.

Other factors that helped in the implementation of the Early Literacy Initiative Project included:

- Acquisition of support materials such as books and computer programs
- Whole-faculty study groups
- Provision of release time for teachers to focus on planning and inservice by bank rolling eight minutes per day and using substitutes (paid by another grant)
- Principal leadership and total involvement with the Early Literacy Initiative Project
- Literacy nights for parents

Factors that Impeded CSR Implementation

Sugar staff experienced only minor impediments to their successful CSR implementation, including some delays in funding. Faculty had to rely on the goodwill and trust of their service providers to wait until the funding was released by the state. The delay was caused in part by personnel turnover at the state level of those who had oversight responsibilities for CSR programs. Also, some parents were concerned about the new reading program, but they were reassured by evident pupil success and interest in reading.

Question 3: What role did the developer(s) (or consultants) play in carrying out your plans?

Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU) consultants, including the Early Literacy Initiative Project director and the on-site coordinators, provided practical strategies in successfully teaching children of low-income and minority backgrounds how to read, write, and spell. They also followed a well-structured staff development model to ensure theory was put into practice. The consultants provided school-site and classroom-specific Early Literacy Initiative Project support adapted to fit Sugar's situation and individual teachers' needs. This allowed the teachers to move from abstract theories to specific applications to successfully implement various Early Literacy Initiative Project components.

The consultants encouraged teachers and the principal to attend regional conferences on early literacy and recognized the school faculty for their successful Early Literacy Initiative Project implementation. The project team also frequently sent visitors to the school to observe Sugar's program. These forms of recognition further reinforced Sugar's efforts and kept faculty motivated to fully implement the Early Literacy Initiative Project.

Question 4: What impact do you feel the implementation of your CSR model has had on students' progress, the teachers, the school, the parents, and the community?

Students

- Improved performance on regular, ongoing classroom assessments of reading progress
- Exhibited greater ease and confidence in written expression
- Showed increased interest in books and reading
- Experienced fewer behavior problems
- Showed greater independence in encoding words, comprehension, spelling, and writing
- Took more risks in expressing ideas through writing
- Became more conversational with teachers

The improved performance of Sugar's primary students was outstanding. The progress that students made in a short period of time greatly exceeded the expectations of teachers.

Teachers

- Improved teaching and evaluation of pupil progress in reading, writing, and spelling
- Developed more collaboration and mutual support between teachers
- Acquired new knowledge concerning the language development of children
- Developed a better feeling toward teaching

Teachers' observation of the improved performance of their students gave them a new sense of potency regarding their potential. They were pleasantly surprised and encouraged by their success, and they recommitted themselves to ensuring the success of all their students.

Schools

- Acquired ample instructional materials and books to successfully teach literacy skills to their pupils
- Acquired skills and confidence to pursue other grant opportunities that will increase learning opportunities for their pupils
- Garnered a well-trained and fully committed faculty to address the literacy needs of their pupils

The CSR grant provided the opportunity to acquire needed instructional materials and new books for Sugar's library. The principal gained much-needed skills and confidence in her ability to apply for grants to facilitate the special needs of Sugar's students.

Parents

- Developed respect and confidence in the teachers' ability to teach literacy skills
- Developed an understanding of the their own role in supporting their children's literacy development
- Acquired job skills and income through participation in various grant programs

Some progress was made to rejuvenate interest in a parent organization. Also, grant efforts have given new job opportunities to unemployed parents in Sugar.

Community

Other than the generation of more parent participation in a parent organization at the school, Sugar's CSR grant did not appear to impact the greater community of Sugar.

Question 5: Now that the grant period has ended, what aspects of your CSR model will continue and what will not? Other plans for the future?

Sugar faculty plan to continue the Early Literacy Initiative Project and extend it into grades 4–6. Internal resources will drive this effort because the school does not have the funds to continue its contract with SLU though the principal is hoping to arrange a monthly visit from an on-site coordinator. This may work because of the high skill level in teaching literacy among several of the teachers. Sugar's faculty intends to continue their whole-faculty study groups that have served as forums to share ideas in teaching literacy. The principal indicated that she will be seeking grants to help support their literacy program, including hiring tutors, training another teacher in Reading Recovery, and acquiring additional books for their classroom and school libraries. The principal also hopes that the success that they had in implementing this new literacy program will carry over into a new mathematics program: Investigations in Numbers, Data, and Space.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Test Score Results

Louisiana has a school accountability system that provides an annual report to parents and school principals for their respective schools. The state reports a school performance score that includes fourth-grade Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) results (counts for 60 percent of the score), the Iowa Tests results (counts for 30 percent of the score), and pupil attendance and dropout rate (counts for 10 percent of the score). In addition, the state requires each student in grades K–3 to take a developmental reading assessment (DRA) and to report this score to the state education department. The following four tables display these data for each of the years of Sugar's CSR grant.

Table 11: Developmental Reading Assessment Results, 1999–2002

	Fall 1999	Spring 2000	Fall 2000	Spring 2001	Fall 2002
Grade	**Percent BL/OL/AL**	**Percent BL/OL/AL**	**Percent BL/OL/AL**	**Percent BL/OL/AL**	**Percent BL/OL/AL**
K		21/21/59			
1		51/20/27		27/50/23	
2	21/39/39	21/29/50	29/40/31	11/44/44	12/27/61
3	26/23/52	29/26/46	18/24/58	23/32/45	19/12/69

BL=Below Grade Level, OL=On Grade Level, AL=Above Grade Level

The DRA results suggest improvement in pupil growth over time. A comparison of the scores of the kindergarten children tested in Spring 2000 with their results as second graders in Fall 2002 shows modest gains with only 12 percent of the pupils below grade level in second grade. However, the Spring 2000 first graders showed real growth in second grade (Spring 2001) and third grade (Fall 2002) with 69 percent of the children above grade level in grade 3 compared to 27 percent in grade 1. A similar pattern of significant change emerges when comparing the performance of Spring 2001 grade 1 students with their performance as second graders in Fall 2002 (61 percent above grade level versus 23 percent). These numbers show promising results, and the individual nature of the assessment makes these scores more reliable over time.

The school performance score (SPS) includes a fourth-grade achievement battery that focuses on English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Table 12 shows the English Language Arts (ELA) and math results. The state established five levels of performance in which student test results are aggregated and reported. The table indicates for each category the percentage of the total students taking the exam.

Table 12: Grade 4 LEAP Results, 2000–2002

Level of Performance	2000 Percent		2001 Percent		2002 Percent	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proficient	3	0	2	2	3	0
Basic	8	3	44	26	21	27
Appr Basic	49	21	37	26	46	24
Unsat	41	77	17	46	30	49
Appr Basic or Above	59	23	83	54	70	52

ELA=English Language Arts, Appr=Approaching, Unsat=Unsatisfactory

At the gross level, there appears to be some progress. For example, in English Language Arts, the 59 percent of the students approaching basic level or above in 2000 grew to 83 percent in 2001, and 70 percent in 2002. Mathematics shows similar gains rising from 23 percent approaching basic level or above in 2000 to 54 percent in 2001 and 52 percent in 2002. Though the table does not show any change in the number of students at advanced and proficient levels, it shows some gains at basic level over time.

The SPS also includes the results of the Iowa Tests administered to grades 3, 5, and 6. Table 13 shows the national percentile ranking for each of these grade levels.

Table 13: National Percentile Rankings on the Iowa Tests, 2000–2002

Grade Level	Spring 2000 Percentile	Spring 2001 Percentile	Spring 2002 Percentile
3	33	34	30
5	28	28	39
6	34	41	33

Sugar's performance on the Iowa Tests remained fairly steady over the three years of the grant with a gain in grade 5 and a slight loss in grade 6 in Spring 2002. Little could be concluded from these scores.

Table 14 shows Sugar's school performance scores from 1999 through 2002. As mentioned earlier, this score is composed of their LEAP results, Iowa Test results, and attendance and dropout rates.

Table 14: School Performance Scores, 1999–2002

Fall 1999	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002
34	36	60	48

Again not much can be concluded from the SPS results other than there appears to be some progress over time. Sugar was cited for "exemplary academic growth" in Fall 2001. However, they continue to be categorized as "academically below the state average," which includes an SPS range of scores from 30 to 80.

Final Comments

Sugar staff were very successful in implementing their CSR model and have been encouraged by their results, which is reflected in the DRAs. The teachers reported that students are performing at a higher level in reading, writing, and spelling than their pre-Early Literacy Initiative Project pupils. The faculty are impressed with how much the children have gained in these areas and how much more articulate they are in conversations with the teachers. Sugar staff believe they wisely invested time and energy in the Early Literacy Initiative Project because of the positive results they have gotten in such a short period of time.

The Early Literacy Initiative Project staff development model was very effective in helping teachers acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to teach this program effectively. In fact, the teachers felt their success and commitment greatly enhanced their status in the parish and other places in Louisiana. Southeastern Louisiana University shares in the success of this program as teachers believe the presence of a competent on-site coordinator played a major role in Sugar's accomplishments.

SLU may not be able to extend its influence to Early Literacy Initiative Project implementation in the intermediate grades. However, many of the elements of the staff development model are in place and may help fill the void. And the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 may provide further funding in support of Sugar's continued challenge to raise the literacy performance of their students.

Appendix E

Sumac Elementary School
Sumac, Arkansas

The following post-CSR grant study summary of Sumac Elementary School was compiled through interviews with Sugar staff and external trainers; a two-day, on-site visit with classroom observations; and a review of reports and related documents. The summary begins with background on the State of Arkansas, the community of Sumac, and Sumac Elementary School. A brief description of Sumac's CSR program follows along with a summary of interviews with Sumac staff and outside trainers. This report also presents and examines student test performance results for the three-year period of the grant, 1999–2002.

State of Arkansas

A recent report titled *Education State Ranking for 2002–2003* (Morgan Quitno, 2002) ranks Arkansas 38th based on 21 factors, 13 of which were considered positive and the remainder negative. Several factors placed Arkansas in the lower quartile compared with other states: per pupil public elementary and secondary school expenditures of $5,470 versus a national level of $6,835, percent of population graduated from high school of 81.7 percent versus a national average of 84.1 percent, percent of public school fourth graders proficient or better in math of 13 percent versus the national average of 25 percent, percent of public school fourth graders proficient or better in reading of 14 percent versus a national average of 26 percent, and average salaries of public school teachers of $34,641 versus a national average of $43,335. On the positive side, Arkansas ranked 48th in the percent of public school teachers who reported being physically attacked in the past 12 months (2.5 percent versus a national average of 4.2 percent) and average class size in public secondary schools (20.6 students versus a national class-size average of 23.4 students).

Beeson and Strange (Fall, 2000), in their research on the rural characteristics for each of the states, provide an additional perspective on Arkansas:

> Arkansas leads the nation in the percentage of its students who attend small, rural schools, and is among the leaders in the percentage of rural children in poverty. Rural teacher salaries are among the lowest in the nation, as is the rate of rural school Internet access. (p. 74)

Arkansas faces some financial constraints in dealing with its rural schools. Having such a large percentage of rural children in poverty further exacerbates educational initiatives in the state.

Community of Sumac

Sumac is located approximately 100 miles south of Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas, and a short distance from the Louisiana state line. The countryside is mostly forested with large pines that belie the former boom of oil wells in the region. Oil plays a role in the local economy, which has become more diversified. Besides oil and petroleum products, the region is known for timber, poultry production, and chemical plants.

Sumac, a bedroom community supported by a small commercial center, has a population of 2,200. The town center includes a number of businesses, such as clothing stores for men and women, a general hardware store, an auto dealership, and a motorcycle shop. There are also a number of empty storefronts that suggest a once viable local economy. Outside the commercial center, which has a non-operating oil pumping station in the middle of Main Street, are modest, well-maintained residential homes. The community, a good place for families raising children, provides ample outdoor opportunities to hunt, fish, and picnic.

Sumac Elementary School

Sumac Elementary School is located on a campus that includes the high school, cafeteria, preschool, and special education facilities. The exterior of the building is brick and is pleasantly landscaped with green grass and modest bushes. The back area of the building includes a typical, well-worn playground.

The six-year-old elementary school building is well maintained, both inside and out. A former principal who wanted to stand outside the main office in one location and be able to observe activities up and down both hallways simultaneously designed the L-shaped building. The interior appears very clean, well lighted, and spacious. Besides self-contained classrooms, there are rooms for art, library, computers, and a teachers' lounge with workspace. The main office provides space for a secretary, principal, conference room, storage, teacher aides, and a full-time computer technology specialist. The ample classrooms each have a sink and drinking fountain. Schools typically found in rural areas tend to be much older and reflect a fair amount of neglect. This is not the case at Sumac. Its physical plant is in good condition and shows a lot of care and expense.

During the 2002–2003 school year, Sumac's K–6 enrollment was 364 students. This reflects a sharp decline in enrollment from 395 students in the 2001–2002 school year. Approximately 75 percent of the student population is white and the remaining 25 percent is black. Approximately half of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Sumac experiences a 5 percent annual turnover of students and a daily attendance rate of 95 percent. The average class size is approximately 16 students, and Sumac's K–12 per pupil expenditure is $5,245. The average salary for K–12 certified teachers is $30,593. The state supports the local school budget at a 70 percent level. Many teachers believe this is a desirable school to teach in compared to other schools in the area. Those who work here feel fortunate to have been hired.

Sumac's CSR Model

Sumac's CSR model primarily has three components. Their Year 1 grant efforts focused on implementing the Core Knowledge and Investigations in Number, Data, and Space programs. Core Knowledge faded over time, and faculty concentrated on the Literature-Based Reading program during Year 2 of the grant. The math program continued throughout the entire three years of their grant.

The Core Knowledge program is a K–8 curriculum based on the work of E. D. Hirsch, Jr. It focuses on teaching a common core of concepts, skills, and knowledge that characterize a "culturally literate" and educated person. Core Knowledge offers a detailed, grade-by-grade content progression of knowledge in history, geography, mathematics, science, language arts, and fine arts. Teachers develop the instructional strategies. It provides half of a school's curriculum.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Investigations in Number, Data, and Space Program was developed by the National Science Foundation, recommended by the Arkansas Statewide Systemic Initiative, and supported by a professor from Southern Arkansas University. This math program emphasizes mathematical reasoning and problem solving in a true sense—students must learn to describe, compare, and discuss their approaches to solving problems. Instead of a textbook, cooperative learning groups and ongoing assessment activities provide the basis of the program.

The Literature-Based Reading program provides a skill checklist correlated with the performance standards on state-level tests and emphasizes ongoing assessment. The program also includes reading infused in all subject areas, students progressing at individual rates, writing as a literacy skill, and Accelerated Reading books and software. A Southern Arkansas University professor supported this program.

Research Questions

Five general questions guided the inquiry process. These questions were used in the interviews of staff and external consultants. Each question is listed below along with a summary of what was learned from these interviews and related documents and/or reports.

Question 1: Reflecting on your school's CSR model, what was or was not implemented over the three years of the grant?

Sumac staff experienced varying degrees of success in implementing the three components of their CSR grant. Core Knowledge received modest support at the beginning and struggled to retain teacher support, which waned in the third year of the grant. The math program was a real challenge for the teachers, particularly when it was implemented in all grades during the first year of the grant. This caused some problems for the upper grades and created some concern on the part of parents, who favored a more traditional math program using a textbook and emphasizing computational skills. The reading program did not get off the ground until the third year and encountered some resistance by staff who felt the literature-based program did not seem that different from their existing reading program.

Core Knowledge experienced some teacher resistance at the very beginning of the grant because many teachers felt they were not consulted about this program and were more or less forced to participate in a preschool inservice workshop. This resistance and ill feelings were never fully resolved, so Core Knowledge curriculum was implemented in a piece-meal manner and left to the discretion of the classroom teachers. This resulted in an uneven implementation and a quick loss of interest by the regular classroom teachers. Special teachers in music and art spoke very highly of the program, but they also see that classroom teachers seem to be paying less attention to teaching Core Knowledge units. Some linkages are being made, however, between Core Knowledge and the new literacy-based program. Also, the new math program has much in common with Core Knowledge curriculum content. The school did make an effort to supply the classroom teachers with supplementary materials to facilitate their implementation of Core Knowledge content.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The new math curriculum, which had greater success, also ran into some difficulties during its implementation. The program does enjoy nearly 100 percent teacher support and an enthusiastic response from the students. It relies on a greater amount of student involvement and interaction using cooperative learning groups and places more emphasis on alternative approaches to problem solving. Teachers have raised some concerns in response to parent comments that more traditional computational skills were being ignored. This has resulted in teachers teaching some of these skills in addition to the new math curriculum. Overall, teachers feel the program matches well with state-mandated math tests and contributes to improved student performance.

The literacy-based reading program experienced a much slower start. Staff decided not to address this program during the first year of the grant because they had their hands full with Core Knowledge and the math program. During the second year of the grant, the teachers participated in a yearlong course designed to provide more understanding about the literacy-based approach. This course continued into the third year of the grant. The program emphasizes guided reading and continued student assessment. Sumac faculty ordered Accelerated Reader materials and software as well as training in the use of this program. The literacy-based program, in its early stages of implementation, will continue into this school year.

Question 2: What seemed to enable your implementation plans and if appropriate, what seemed to prevent implementing aspects of your CSR model?

Factors that Contributed to CSR Implementation

CSR grant leadership and initial planning were important in setting the agenda for desired changes over the three years of the grant. Teachers generally supported the CSR components though there were some faculty members who were unhappy about their lack of input in the selection of the chosen programs. A determined administration broke down some of this initial resistance by meeting monthly with groups of teachers to handle the concerns about implementing various programs.

The faculty viewed the consultant assistance provided through the three curricular components of their CSR grant as effective. These consultations enabled the staff to see that their respective programs were doable and were producing positive results. Further, the administration followed through on teacher requests for instructional materials. The school district paid for a graduate course for 10 to 12 teachers for the math and literacy components of the grant. Southern Arkansas University faculty members provided classroom assistance, including consultations and demonstration lessons. These inservice opportunities along with common grade-level planning time encouraged teacher sharing of successful practices. All of these factors played an important part in keeping the teachers focused on CSR plans, but the Arkansas benchmark-testing program also provided a strong incentive to pursue new approaches to improve student performance.

Factors that Impede CSR Implementation

As one faculty member observed, "getting some of our teachers to change their teaching methods is like attempting to turn an ocean liner around." As stated earlier, there were several teachers who did not like how they were introduced to the planned curricular changes. Each of the planned changes met some teacher resistance. Some teachers felt Core Knowledge was sprung on them at the last minute and minimal use was made of the outside consultant.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The math intervention was implemented in all grades simultaneously, and upper-grade faculty felt overwhelmed at times when trying to provide the adequate student background needed for the new math curriculum. The program's lack of student textbooks seemed to further compound the problem because this became a significant concern for some parents who asked the school board to discontinue the program. This debate was in progress during the most recent site visit to Sumac. Some teachers and parents wanted to return to a more traditional math program, while others saw great potential in the new math, especially in developing problem-solving skills. The literacy program was delayed in part because the teachers felt overloaded with numerous demands in adopting all these new programs at once. This resentment and resistance are testing the commitment of the school leadership to continue CSR plans.

Question 3: What role did the developer(s) (or consultants) play in carrying out your plans?

Sumac faculty members generally believed the consultants were helpful, respectful, and effective in their training activities, especially for the math program and to some degree for the reading intervention that had a late start.

Core Knowledge did not come together as well. While the faculty members attended an initial preschool workshop during the first year of the grant, the subsequent support they received was more hit or miss. Teachers spoke positively about the preschool workshop and the Core Knowledge Web site for the downloading of lesson plans. However, follow-up site visits to the school weren't as effective, and teachers became less involved in Core Knowledge during the third year of the grant.

Southern Arkansas University math and reading professors received positive comments for their respective courses, their enthusiasm, and their follow up with individual teachers. The progress made to date in these respective programs hinged greatly on the support and consultations of these two professors. The Core Knowledge consultant was hampered by distance from the school, initial resistance, and the administration's allowing teachers to choose whether to teach Core Knowledge units. As a result, many faculty members did not invite the Core Knowledge consultant into their classrooms during site visits or request her assistance.

Question 4: What impact do you feel the implementation of your CSR model has had on students' progress, the teachers, the school, the parents, and the community?

Students

- Increased enthusiasm and interest in math
- Placed greater emphasis on individual progress in math and reading
- Acquired of new math and reading skills

Student enthusiasm for the new math program, particularly in the primary grades, was considered very positive. Gains in other skill areas are not as evident at this time.

Teachers

- Acquired new teaching skills through inservice training, especially in math
- Returned to master's degree programs and completed degrees
- Worked harder at providing lessons that were not textbook dependent

- Learned to customize learning activities to fit student abilities and needs
- Became more aware of teaching techniques and teaching style
- Increased sharing of ideas and techniques between teachers, especially those who took the courses in math or reading
- Gained recognition from other teachers in the area for their successful efforts in implementing the new math program

Though the math program got off to a bumpy start, it contributed a great deal to teachers using newer methods that emphasized student involvement and interactions. Other subject area interventions were not as stimulating or motivating as the new math.

Schools

- Acquired greater alignment of curricula from Core Knowledge and math programs
- Produced more consistency in how teachers teach and link to benchmark test items
- Gained some ground over other schools in gearing up for state testing requirements
- Developed a greater awareness of test results and related implications

Core Knowledge did result in greater alignment and coordination of curriculum offerings in the respective grades. Toward the end of the CSR grant period, teachers said they were more aware of their students' performance on state-mandated tests.

Parents

- Developed some appreciation for the school's CSR efforts and results
- Increased interest in school's programs
- Showed some concern about the math program and the lack of traditional math instruction and text

Parents modestly supported the CSR efforts at Sumac Elementary School. Some parents believed the new math program was not living up to its promises and they asked the board to return to more traditional math programs.

Community

- Expressed some modest support for the school's new efforts
- Showed more awareness about test scores and their school's performance

Sumac's schools enjoyed widespread support in the community. However, as members of the community become more aware of the school's state-mandated tests results, which are below the desired level of performance, their support may erode.

Question 5: Now that the grant period has ended, what aspects of your CSR model will continue and what will not? Other plans for the future?

Sumac faculty will keep some aspects of the three CSR grant components. The math program enjoys strong teacher support and received endorsement from the district's K–12 math teachers. This may be offset by parent concerns and pressure on the school board to discontinue the program. Despite this, teachers want to keep the new math program, and the professor who played a major role in its implementation will continue to consult with Sumac's teachers.

Though teachers were just beginning to focus on the literacy initiative at the time of this study, they support it enough to continue it. The reading professor, who is central to this effort, will continue her involvement with Sumac teachers. A few teachers do support the Core Knowledge program and plan to continue teaching Core Knowledge units, especially in social studies and science. Other teachers are feeling pressure to address the state-mandated test items more directly, which distracts them from the Core Knowledge program. Faculty members ordered instructional materials under the CSR grant and will continue to use them.

The Arkansas mandated testing programs will set the agenda for Sumac schools. Faculty will filter future curricular and instructional efforts through these test requirements and decide whether any new approaches will contribute in a tangible way to improved student performance. Sumac teachers are feeling considerable pressure to improve their test results, and they would like to minimize the distractions that might come with new program efforts unless these efforts are likely to improve test scores. This situation requires greater instructional leadership at the school and district levels.

Student Test Scores Results

The State of Arkansas mandates benchmark exams in mathematics and literacy for grades 4 and 6. Sumac Elementary School also tests grades 1–6 on the Stanford reading and mathematics achievement tests. The following tables show the results of these tests from 1998 through 2001. The benchmark exam results in tables 15 and 16 are organized into four levels of performance (e.g., Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced), and the numbers reported represent the percentage of students who scored at these respective levels. Tables 17 and 18 present average national percentile rankings on the Stanford tests. Sumac administers the benchmark tests in the spring and the Stanford tests in the fall.

Table 15: Percentage of Grade 4 Students Who Scored at Different Levels on Arkansas Benchmark Exams in Math and Literacy, 1999–2002

Grade Level (Content)	Performance Level	1999 Percent	2000 Percent	2001 Percent	2002 Percent
Fourth/Math	Below Basic	41	37	47	33
	Basic	29	19	17	28
	Proficient	12	27	22	22
	Advanced	17	17	14	17
Fourth/Literacy	Below Basic	29	7	28	22
	Basic	32	31	47	41
	Proficient	39	61	25	37
	Advanced	0	2	0	0

A year-to-year analysis of grade 4 math and literacy benchmark results in Table 15 show some progress. In 1999, prior to initiating the CSR grant activities, 41 percent of students scored at

Below Basic level in math. In 2002, the last year of the CSR grant, 33 percent of students scored at the Below Basic level. In 2002, 22 percent of students scored at the Proficient level, while only 12 percent of students scored at that level in 1999. In literacy, the 32 percent of students scoring at the Basic level in 1999 improved to a 41 percent in 2002. However, if the percentages for the Proficient level in literacy for years 2000 and 2002 are compared, there is a noticeable decline from 61 percent in 2000 to 37 percent in 2002. These results give the overall impression that the gains in math and literacy were not necessarily consistent from year to year.

Table 16: Percentage of Grade 6 Students Who Scored at Different Levels on Arkansas Benchmark Exams in Math and Literacy, 2001–2002

Grade Level/Content	Performance Level	2001 Percent	2002 Percent
Sixth/Math	Below Basic	50	22
	Basic	42	29
	Proficient	8	31
	Advanced	0	17
Sixth/Literacy	Below Basic	44	22
	Basic	42	53
	Proficient	14	24
	Advanced	0	0

When comparing 2001 and 2002 benchmark results, Table 16 shows that sixth graders improved their performance in math and literacy. In 2002, 31 percent of the students scored at the Proficient level in math, which is an improvement over the 8 percent of student who scored at the Proficient level in 2001. In 2002, 17 percent scored at the Advanced level, while no students scored at this level in 2001. The table shows some gains for sixth graders in literacy. The Proficiency level reflects the greatest gain going from 14 percent in 2001 to 24 percent in 2002

The benchmark results displayed in tables 15 and 16 allow a cohort group analysis. In 1999, the fourth graders performed better on the math and literacy exams than they did when they were sixth graders in 2001. The fourth graders of 2000 show some slight improvement in math when tested as sixth graders, but this is less true in literacy.

Table 17: Average Percentile Rankings for Grades 1–6 on the Stanford Reading Achievement Test, 1998–2001

Grade Level	1998 Percentile	1999 Percentile	2000 Percentile	2001 Percentile
1	36	50	55	54
2	47	50	61	63
3	49	37	53	65
4	39	40	33	39
5	48	47	49	N/A
6	47	39	39	42

A year-to-year comparison of the average percentile rankings in Table 17 shows improvement in reading in grades 1–3 from 1998 to 2001. This is not the case for fourth and sixth graders, whose performance remains essentially the same. The year-to-year cohort comparisons do not reveal any important gains. For example, first graders in 1998 scored at the 36th percentile. When tested as fourth graders in 2001, they scored at the 39th percentile. Similar patterns emerge for other grade-level cohorts.

Table 18: Average Percentile Rankings for Grades 1–6 on the Stanford Math Achievement Test, 1998–2001

Grade Level	1998 Percentile	1999 Percentile	2000 Percentile	2001 Percentile
1	40	50	49	57
2	32	52	55	53
3	39	35	48	48
4	40	33	28	43
5	32	32	43	N/A
6	32	36	30	48

Year-to-year comparisons of math results in Table 18 show some improvement in the year 2001 for all grade levels. Year 2001 percentile rankings seem better when compared with the percentile rankings at the same grade level in 1998. Cohort group comparisons are not as promising except for the third graders. In 1998, they scored at the 39th percentile, while in 2001 they scored at the 48th percentile as sixth graders. A similar pattern is not evident for other cohort classes.

The test results on both the benchmark exams and the Stanford Achievement Tests display some signs of improvement, but, in many cases, they show little or no progress over time.

Final Comments

Sumac Elementary School took on an ambitious program with their CSR grant. The math component received the most favorable results though it may be in some jeopardy because of its non-traditional methods. The implementation of the Core Knowledge program was spotty because teachers were allowed to decide whether to continue using the program. The literacy program implementation in progress has sufficient momentum to stay on the front burner.

Because concerns over the school's benchmark test performance are commanding more attention, Sumac faculty members may decide not to take on any new projects unless they can contribute directly to improved test performance. Sumac test results reflect some trend toward improvement but not enough to give Sumac staff a sense of significant gains resulting from their CSR grant efforts. Sumac is facing the challenge of forging a consensus among the teachers to support the implementation of new and promising instructional practices that lead to improved student performance on the Arkansas benchmark exams.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
X	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").